



LIVES
OF
THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

St. Ninian,
BISHOP OF CANDIDA CASA.

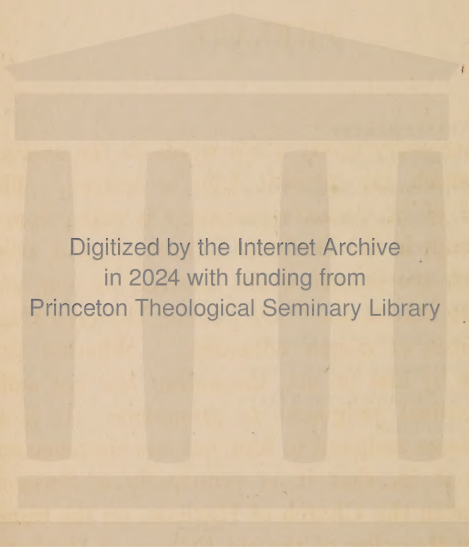
MANSUETI HÆREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

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PREFACE.

IT is necessary to say a few words on the sources from which the present Life is derived. The account of St. Aelred's parentage is taken from a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, (Laud, 668) in which are several works ascribed to him, and amongst others, one "*De Sanctis Ecclesiæ Hagulstadensis et eorum miraculis.*" Whether this work is by him or not, the author has not sufficient critical judgment to pronounce. It is in some places assigned to him, but one circumstance against it is, that it is principally a Sermon, preached in the Church of Hexham, on the translation of the relics of the old Bishops of Hexham, apparently by the Prior of the Canons. A great part of it, however, from fol. 67 of the manuscript, is a written continuation of the history, and was not preached. If one may be allowed to conjecture, this part might be written by St. Aelred. It is like his style (though it should be said that the Sermon also is like it), and the historical know-

ledge which it displays, also makes it likely to be his. There is nothing in the M.S. itself to indicate that the persons of whom it gives an account were St. Aelred's ancestors; this fact is gathered from Richard of Hexham, *De statu Hagulstadenſis Eccleſiæ*, b. 2, c. 9. There is also an incidental proof that St. Aelred's ancestors were persons connected with the Church of Durham, in a letter from Reginald, a monk of Durham, to St. Aelred, in which he thanks him for some collections, taken from documents in the Church of Durham by his ancestors, and communicated by him. This letter is found in a Bodleian manuscript, Fairfax, 6.

The life in Capgrave and the Bollandists has only been partially followed, as it contains various historical inaccuracies. St. Aelred's own works have been on the whole the principal authority made use of. A few notices of the Saint have been inserted in the Life of St. Waltheof, to whom they rather belong. The author hoped to have brought the two lives out together, which, however, has been found impossible.

St. Aelred was canonized by Pope Celestine III., A. D. 1191, according to the Peterborough Annals.

LIFE OF
St. Ninian,
BISHOP OF CANDIDA CASA, AND
APOSTLE OF THE SOUTHERN PICTS,
CIRC. A. D. 360-432.

CHAPTER I.

Introduction.

How many of us have never heard of St. Ninian ! How many, on hearing of him, would carelessly put aside the thought of his history, as a matter of no concern, as a tale of former days, of what once was, and is no longer, in any way which connects him with us, or us with him. But this is a thoughtless way of viewing any subject. All things may be connected one with another ; the works of former times may have exercised an influence which still lives. Still more is this the case with Saints. The world passes away, and the works of the world, and men, so far as they are of the world, and unite themselves with the world, pass with it ; but they who are gifted with divine life, and united to Christ, abide for ever ; now more truly living than when the world saw them.

If there be one whom the Church has recognized as a Saint, there is a work of Divine Grace at which

we should pause, and turn aside, and view with reverend awe ; there is a child of Adam renewed in the Divine image ; one in whom a work has been wrought, which is begun in many and perfected in few. His history, could we see it as it is—his inward history—how eventful would it be ; how many a crisis would it involve ! What motions of Divine grace—what watchful Providences—what a correspondence on his own part to the calls of Heaven ! What a precious tale of deeds and sufferings, of watchfulness and self-restraint, of prayers and heavenly aspirations ! How intense is the interest excited by examining some work of human skill, and tracing its beauty, or contrivance, or finished art ! How full are the natural works of God of all that is calculated to engage our attention, to awaken surprise, delight, and admiration. With how much more of deep feeling then should we view the spiritual creation, and trace out there the workings of providence and the effects of grace. Beautiful as is the natural world, the fair budding of spring, and the grass and trees, and the clear shining after rain, they are but faint images indeed of holy men, and of their varied graces, whose sweetness Scripture shadows out by the choicest objects of sense. And as we gratefully commemorate the glory and goodness of God, as shown in these passing works, still more should the manifold and abiding graces of His Elect call forth our thankfulness and praise.

But, it may be said, little is known of St. Ninian. It is true. Yet this might almost enhance our interest in him, and our wish to know that little. How many are there in every rank of life who pass from this world unrecognized, save by a few, yet high in the

Divine favour and of great attainments in sanctity. That Saints should be distinguished in any marked way, seems to be owing to (what we may call) the accident of their being brought by circumstances into positions which have elicited their hidden graces, and manifested them to the world. But as their holiness is independent of its visible effects, so those effects are no measure of it. By the world, men are estimated for their influence on its fortunes ; and in proportion as they have influenced it, is the degree of honour assigned them. But sanctity is independent of such outward manifestations or visible fruits. Though, in St. Ninian's case, if we believe those who in olden time so greatly venerated this holy man, there were not wanting abundant sensible tokens of his power and prevailing intercession. Even Protestant writers¹ allow that he had the gift of miracles, and the numerous worshippers at his shrine, three or four hundred years ago, believed, and would allege facts in proof, that they received blessings, even miraculous ones, through his prayers availing with God.

Among ourselves, there has been a long suspension of that everlasting remembrance in which the righteous ought to be held, that affectionate interest with which we ought to cherish those who in their day have laboured for the Church, and been marked by special gifts of grace. But it is not many centuries since the name of St. Ninian was one of the most honoured in the Calendar, and people flocked from every part of the island to visit his shrine. His memory, has, indeed, had singular reverses. From the fifth to the twelfth century, it was scarcely known beyond the

¹ The Madgeburg Centuriators, tom. 4, 1429.

limits of the wild district where he had laboured and died. The only records of him were in the memory of his people, or written in a barbarous and unknown language. The succession of his See was interrupted. Successive tribes of uncivilized Celts occupied his country, and seemed to have obliterated almost every vestige of his earthly labours. But seven centuries passed, and his memory rose from its obscurity ; his power was recognized, his shrine was frequented, and his intercessions sought. Amid the wild wars of Scotland and the Border, a safe conduct was provided for pilgrims who were visiting his Church, and kings sought his prayers. Their piety was mixed, doubtless, according to the character of individuals, with even the grossest superstition ; still it implied a general recognition of his sanctity ; and the reason they would themselves have given of this devotion was, that they had experienced blessings through it ; and that such was, in some instances, at least, the case, is the most natural and obvious account of the matter.

That little should have been known of his history need not surprise us. He lived in a dark period of British history, and laboured among a rude people. In the centuries following his death, Galloway was the scene of frequent wars, and changed its masters and its inhabitants. The Southern Picts whom he had converted were in time merged among the other races who inhabited the east of Scotland, and it was, as to the world's history, as if he had never lived. But this is not different from what we might expect. Of how many other distinguished Saints have few traces been left in history ! Of how many of the holy Apostles is it merely recorded that they preached the gospel in certain remote districts, and were mar-

tyred ! Of the fruits of their preaching, of the Churches they founded, no certain vestiges remain. Yet their names are written in heaven ; their works are recorded there ; and the souls who, through their means, though of distant ages and of barbarous languages, were brought into that Communion, where all learn one language, and are formed after one model, and are brethren and fellow-countrymen in Christ, are blessing and praising God for the mercy he showed in their conversion. It may be to the increase of their blessedness to be thus humbled ; to have their works hidden from the world ; that having no reward of human praise here, they may enjoy a more ample recompense in heaven.

Do not think slightly then of St. Ninian because he is little known ; but rather let us trace out with reverential love what may be learnt of him. We know more of him, and on better authority, than we do of many more exalted Saints ; and if in searching out what may be known of him, we seem to be led into dry and antiquarian matter, let it not be an ungrateful labour. It may be repaid by the contemplation of his graces.

And there are circumstances which give a peculiar interest to St. Ninian. Besides his being one of our own Saints, and the earliest Missionary, and first Bishop in Scotland of whom we have any authentic record ; he lived at a time when there was a change taking place in the mode in which conversions to the faith were made. The barbarous nations were now pouring in upon the Christians, and threatening the destruction of the empire of the Church, as though it were not Christ's. St. Ninian was one of the first of those who turned back the arms of the invaders, and reduced them by meekness and truth, under the gentle and happy sway

of the gospel. Again, conversions had hitherto been of individuals, now they became national ; that of the Picts was one of the first. And the system on which missions were conducted in the countries of Europe, found one of their earliest types in him.

It may, indeed, very naturally be asked, what do we really know of this ancient Saint, and, considering his age, country, and circumstances, what authentic records can there be of the events of his life ?

Of the history of Britain at that time, (the close of the fourth and early part of the fifth century) the notices, whether civil or ecclesiastical, are very few, scanty, and unsatisfactory. It was St. Ninian's lot to live at that critical period, when the Roman power was breaking, and the empire was giving way under internal divisions, and the inroads of the Northern tribes. And Britain, which had been raised from a wild and savage condition to considerable civilization, was again to be thrown back into a more miserable barbarism by the inundations of the Caledonians, and the occupation of the Saxons. They were too much engaged in fighting to write narratives of what they did ; and any memorials they had were lost in the troubles which followed. Of its ecclesiastical history we are still more ignorant. The age of St. Ninian may be looked on as one of which almost nothing is recorded in the annals of the British Church ; so that we must form our ideas of this particular period by what we know of the times preceding and following it. It would come in to fill the blank between the third and fourth chapters of the account of the British Church, which is prefixed to the life of St. Augustine.¹

¹ No. iii. of this Series.

Of one then who lived in such an age, what records can we have ? May not the history be given up as entirely uncertain ? I conceive not ; and for these reasons. Personal history is preserved when public events are unrecorded and forgotten. Nay, in all history it is often through the narratives of the lives of individuals alone, that many circumstances of public importance have been preserved to us ; it is round the individual that interest centres, and his doings which are remembered. We know how children are impressed by the words and deeds of individual worthies, when of the general course of the history they have no clear ideas, so that the best histories for them consist of a series of personal tales. And it is so with men generally, and particularly in a simple state of society. Among Christians this is still more the case ; since with them the affectionate remembrance of those who are gone, is heightened by religious reverence, and sanctioned and sustained by the commemoration of the departed. It is to the individual Saint that Christians look, rather than to the events of general history ; for they view him as the work of Divine grace ; whilst the course of the world, though in its progress and issue, the effect of His providence, is in detail but the manifestation of man's wilfulness and misery.

We cannot suppose but that the Picts, among whom St. Ninian had introduced the Gospel, would retain the memory of one to whom they were indebted for all they held dear. And in Galloway he had left a standing memorial in the church of stone, which was looked on with no little interest by the admiring Britons, and was thought to give a name to the place where it stood. He left a monastery too, and that

would be the means of preserving some records of him. That such records were preserved we know, on the authority of the earliest witnesses we could have—the most learned and accomplished scholars, and the most holy men of their age—Bede and Alcuin.

In Bede's time the Southern Picts were still existing as a separate race, and testified to having derived their Christianity from St. Ninian ; and Whithern, with his church and tomb, was a visible memorial. A Saxon succession of Bishops and a Saxon monastery had been established here, on the conquest of Galloway by that people. So that in Bede we have the testimony of one who had full means of informing himself on the subject, as to the main incidents of St. Ninian's life ; as also had Alcuin, of whom there is a letter still extant, written to the Brethren of the Saxon Monastery of Whithern, recognizing the miracles and holiness of the Saint. And after this we find incidental mention of St. Ninian in different writers, all treating the chief facts of his life as matter of authentic history.

These are however only portions of information incidentally given, indications of a larger store existing among the people whom he had converted, and where his Church and monastery were. Among them we might expect that records would exist, (as among the other Celtic tribes in Wales and Ireland,) written in their own language, and from that very circumstance little known to the rest of the world. Galloway had been over-run by different tribes, but (with the exception of the brief occupation by the Saxons) they were all of the Celtic race, and their languages, though different dialects, were mutually intelligible. And we know that in the twelfth century lives of the Saint were extant in their language.

This we learn from the testimony of St. Aelred of Rievaulx, who was requested by the brethren of the convent of Whithern to compose a life of their Patron Saint in Latin. In an Introduction addressed to them, he speaks of the disadvantage arising from the life of the Saint only existing in a barbarous language, (or being written in a barbarous style) which obscured his history, and interfered with the pleasure and edification of the readers. It seems to be implied that more than one life was extant in Celtic, and perhaps in Latin, but that very rude and barbarous, and that St. Aelred selected as the groundwork of his life the one which seemed to him the most authentic. And it is possible that a life referred to by Archbishop Usher, as existing among the Irish, may be the representative of some of the others.

We regard this life then, as representing what St. Aelred considered the most authentic account then existing of St. Ninian, an account not improbably, in tradition at least, almost contemporaneous with the Saint, and supplying the information which Bede and Alcuin possessed respecting him.

Of the authority of St. Aelred as a biographer, little need be said. He, whom even Bale calls a second St. Bernard, was endued with that kindred sanctity which fitted him to be the biographer of a Saint ; and his education in the Scottish court and long friendship with the king, and in particular his connexion with Fergus, the lord of Galloway, and his labours for the restoration of religion in that country, as it led him to tread in the footsteps of St. Ninian, would enable him to ascertain all that could be learnt of authority respecting him.

The work was written towards the close of his own life, between 1153 and 1166. It agrees in style with

his other works, and is every way worthy of him. Being intended for spiritual reading and edification, it contains much that is inserted for that end, and throws the sentiments which might be supposed to influence the Saint into the dramatic form of a soliloquy or speech. Perhaps in one or two points it is liable to the charge of anachronism, from the writer's imagining the existence of the customs of his own time, in the days of which he is writing. It is a singular gift in a writer to be able to strip himself of the habits of thought to which he has ever been familiarized, or even constantly to keep in mind that practices existing in his own day are of recent origin. It ought to be added, that St. Aelred's Life bears internal marks of truth, from its correspondence with other history in minute points of chronology, with the circumstances and habits of the age, and with the distinctions of the tribes who occupied the country, as the researches of the latest writers have determined them. Indeed from St. Aelred to the present century, almost all who have written about St. Ninian have fallen into some error or other from which he seems to be free. This life soon became a popular work in our monasteries, if we may argue from the numerous copies which seem to have been made.

It was abridged by John of Tinmouth, and from him was inserted by Capgrave in his collection. It has received the highest sanction from the Scottish Church, as selections from it were read as Lessons for St. Ninian's day, in the Aberdeen Breviary. There are copies made within a few years after St. Aelred's death, in the Bodleian and the British Museum; and it has been printed, though without the Intro-

duction, by Pinkerton, in a collection of old Lives of Scottish Saints.

Later writers mention further circumstances respecting St. Ninian, but we have little evidence of their truth. They may in some cases be regarded as traditional stories, and have credit given to them as not being intrinsically improbable, in others the silence of St. Aelred respecting them may be taken as a fair proof that he did not know, or did not believe them. The Irish life referred to by Archbishop Usher does not appear entitled to much consideration.

CHAPTER II.

St. Ninian's early Days.

THE date of St. Ninian's birth must be placed about the middle of the fourth century. Alford has given 360. We may rather conceive it to have been a few years earlier, as in 357, so as to make him forty years of age at his consecration as a Bishop, in 397.

His name has been variously written and pronounced. We now uniformly call him Ninian, as he has usually been called in England, and so his name is given in the Roman Martyrology and by St. Aelred. In Bede, however, the name is Nynias, in William of Malmesbury Ninas, in other writers Ninus. In Scotland he is popularly called Ringan, the word being pronounced Rin'nan, or Rinnian, or, (as in the Shetland Isles) Ronyan. In Ireland, both Ringan and Ninian. How the difference in the first letter arose (for the

rest is much the same in pronunciation) we have no means of conjecturing.

The father of the Saint, as his biographer explicitly states, was a British Prince. To appreciate however the condition of such a person in the age of St. Ninian, we must forget the associations which we usually connect with the Ancient Britons. This was no longer a country occupied by wild savages, with half naked and painted bodies, who lived in assemblages of miserable huts, buried in woods and protected by morasses. This state of things might exist in those parts of the Island which were unsubdued or unoccupied by the Romans ; but those in which they had now for three centuries been predominant, had, like their other provinces, become assimilated to the habits of the conquerors.

Under this transforming system, a complete change had been made in the appearance of the country and the habits of the people. Forests had been cleared, marshes drained, bridges thrown over the rivers, and roads formed, intersecting the whole island, and affording speedy and secure communication. Towns sprung up, which imitated the cities of the continent. They had their temples, basilicas, and theatres adorned with painting and sculpture ; their shows and exhibitions. So that in a period of three hundred years, Britain advanced in wealth and prosperity, and her artisans rivalled in activity and skill those of the continent ; "every production of art and nature, every object of convenience or luxury, was accumulated in this rich and fruitful province." The remains which are still left among us, bespeak the advance of luxury and civilization. The tessellated pavement, the marble bath, the elegant vase, tell what

Roman taste had produced in England ; while we still use, after a lapse of sixteen hundred years, the roads which her labour formed.

With these changes there rose up a corresponding alteration in the native population. They became Romans ; filled the ranks of the legions ; acquired the rights of citizens, and naturally imitated, as the model of refinement and civilization, the dress, language, and manners of the Italian. The British language still continued as the mother tongue of the great body of the people, but even that was in a measure Latinized, and among the higher classes, Latin was generally spoken. The pleadings of the courts were conducted in it, and the British youth were taught to speak it by their grammarians and rhetoricians, whose instructions formed the chief part of Roman education. Even in the days of Agricola Latin was cultivated, and the natives excelled in eloquence ; the sons of the British chieftains received a Roman education, and began to adopt the Roman dress ; and in the fourth century, these beginnings had issued in the complete assimilation of the Provincial to the Roman habits ; and the son of a British prince may be conceived not to have differed much, in point of manners and civilization, from the inhabitants of any other part of the empire.

Alford, indeed, smiles at the flattery of his biographer, in exalting the Saint to the worldly distinction of the son of a king. St. Aelred, however, or his Galwegian authority, was quite aware of the meaning of this title when applied to a British chief. He says, in speaking of Tudual, a petty prince in Galloway, "That the whole island was divided into portions subject to different kings." Like the other Celtic nations,

the Britons consisted of distinct tribes, with various subdivisions of septs and clans, each under its own chieftain, and these subordinated to a superior one. Thus the four Kings whom Cæsar speaks of in the one kingdom of Kent. These national subordinations, living on under, and through, the Roman period, and naturally prevailing most on the outskirts of the empire, are supposed to have been the origin of the clans of the Scottish border. St. Aelred would identify the position of the father of our Saint, with the kings who governed the whole of the Cumbrian Britons till within the memory of his own time ; though this is giving him a wider extent of authority than he probably possessed.

To suppose St. Ninian the son of one of the minor chieftains under the Roman sway, is not assigning him a very high or improbable distinction. These kings, indeed, from their lands, or the contributions of their tribes, often acquired considerable wealth, and this coincides with what is said by his biographer of the sacrifice he made in relinquishing his father's house and his prospects in Britain, as well as with all we hear of his education, and his acquaintance with the full extent of theological teaching, which his own country could supply.

St. Ninian's father then was a petty chieftain of a British tribe, and, as we should infer from St. Aelred's description, on the north-west coast of Cumberland. It is true that the claim of Cumberland to this her one only native Saint may be disputed, and the right we have to introduce St. Ninian into a series of English Saints. For two other parts of the island have been generally assigned. On the one hand, though without any alleged ground so far as we can ascertain, North Wales is stated

to have been his birth-place by Leland, Bale, and others ; while he has most commonly been regarded as a native of Scotland, and it has not unnaturally been supposed that he was born near Whithern, the seat of his future Bishopric ; not unnaturally, because it was to labour for the restoration of religion among his own countrymen, primarily, that he was sent from Rome. The inhabitants of Galloway, however, were of one and the same race with the Britons of Cumberland, and so were really his countrymen, even if he were born in Cumberland ; and as we go on it will appear that his mission at first was not directed to Whithern, but that after landing and preaching in his native country, he chose that as his permanent abode. St. Aelred is certainly an unprejudiced witness. His authority was a Galwegian life, and he was writing his narrative for the Church of Galloway, and he had strong affections for that country. Still he states, as the received opinion of his day, that the coast of Cumberland by the Solway was the birth-place of the Saint. His words are, "in that district, as it is thought, which lying in the western parts of the island, (where the sea, stretching out, as it were, an arm, and forming two angles on each side, separates what are now the kingdoms of the Scotch and English) is proved, not only by the authority of histories, but also by the memory of some persons, to have had kings of its own, even to the latest times of the Saxons."¹ This arm of the sea

¹ "In ea, ut putatur, regione, quæ in occiduis ipsius insulæ partibus (ubi Oceanus quasi brachium porrigens, et ex utraque parte duos angulos faciens, Scotorum nunc et Anglorum regna dividit) constituta, usque ad novissima Anglorum tempora proprium habuisse regem, non solum historiarum fide, sed quorundam quoque memoriâ comprobatur."

is evidently the Solway, which on the cession of Cumberland to Henry II., 1153, became the boundary of the two kingdoms ; and it was on the western shore of the Island, and in a district which had kings of its own, “*usque ad novissima Anglorum tempora ;*” that is, till the end of the Saxon times. The Cumbrian Britons had kings of their own till the year 946, when the last of their princes, Dunmail, fell in defence of their narrow territories, and Edmund gave the conquered country to the Scottish kings. The British inhabitants continued as a separate race in the time of St. Aelred, and took a conspicuous part in the Battle of the Standard.

It is quite clear that Galloway was not the country intended, for it had Lords of its own, who were in power in Aelred's day, and some time after ; and as he was on terms of intimate friendship with Fergus, the then lord, he would certainly not speak of them as matter either of history or tradition.

Pinkerton indeed in a note on St. Aelred's life, supposes as others had done, that Strathclydd, the Scottish portion of the great northern settlement of Britons, is the district referred to. But there are these objections to the view. Strathclydd which lies on the opposite side of the Solway, and stretches to the Clyde, would scarcely have been described as in the western parts, in connexion with the mention of that sea, as it is its south-eastern coast only which abuts upon the Solway. Again, though the Strathclydd race of kings had continued till 975, or perhaps 1018, when there is the last mention of the inhabitants of Strathclydd as having a king ; yet it does not appear why they should be mentioned in connexion with the Angli—the Saxons—who had not occupied

that district for some centuries previously, and then only for a short time and very partially. Indeed the "*usque ad novissima Anglorum tempora*" would not seem to have any meaning as regarded any part of Scotland, where, in St. Aelred's days, the Angli still continued in as much power as at any previous time.¹

And there is a remarkable confirmation of our view in Leland's account; for though he represents North Wales as Ninian's birth-place, and throughout his history differs materially from St. Aelred, yet he says that the country the Saint first visited as a missionary, was the coast of Cumberland, "between St. Bees Head and Carlisle," and Galloway. This is what we conceive him to have done, supposing that part of Cumberland to have been his birth-place, and so far it coincides with St. Aelred's account, that he first went to his native place; except that Leland, quite erroneously it would seem, places that missionary visit before, instead of after, his residence at Rome.

It is allowed that St. Aelred's description is obscure, but to suppose it to describe the Cumbrian coast, seems the most natural interpretation. Let us then assume that St. Ninian is an English and a Cumbrian Saint. In that case he would be one of the great tribe of Brigantes, who occupied the whole of the Northern counties of England. The district where he was born was

¹ The name Cumbria was given to the whole district occupied by the Cwmry, in Scotland and the north of England, sometimes including even Galloway. The Scottish part was called Strathclydd; the English, to which the name of Cumberland was afterwards appropriated, Reged. We must not, therefore, claim the authority of writers who call St. Ninian a native of Cumbria, as they may have meant, of the Scottish portion.

in those days one of considerable importance. It lay close to the wall of Severus, which there came to its western limit, and for the defence of this line, a very large proportion of the Roman forces was stationed in the neighbourhood ; and it was near the point where the great line of road through York to Carlisle terminated. These circumstances made the district a busy and excited one, and gave many opportunities of intercourse with the Romans, and the rest of the world. Still it was the busy scene of camps and warfare, for the country was intersected by roads, and filled by garrisons ; and its position on the Scottish border must even then have made it a restless and unsettled dwelling-place.

In a religious point of view, it is possible that this free intercourse may have brought a knowledge of the Gospel earlier amongst the natives of this district, than of others which were in actual distance less remote. We know so little of the religious history of Britain at this time, that we must judge much by probabilities, and the parallels of other countries. There had long been a Bishop at York, and probably the small size of the island would have promoted a more general conversion of the people than in France, where, at the same period, a large portion of the country were still unconverted. In the towns, Christian Churches would be established ; but in country districts, the people might still be to a great extent pagan. Indeed, it was to complete the conversion of the inhabitants of the western side of the island, as well as to root out the errors which prevailed among those who were Christians, that St. Ninian was many years after sent back from Rome. That the father of St. Ninian was a Christian, is mentioned as a distinction.

We might probably infer, from the prince of the district having accepted the gospel, that it would be promoted among his countrymen, that Churches were built, and clergy fixed among them. St. Ninian's reverence for Churches is mentioned by his biographer, as a mark of his youthful piety. Now, not far from the sea-coast, in the very part of Cumberland where we conceive St. Ninian to have been born, and of which his father was the chieftain, there is a church, the architecture of which has been supposed to indicate its being built during the Roman occupation of Britain—that of Newton Arloch, in the parish of Holme Cultram. It is, then, not an improbable conjecture, that this church, which, unlike the rest of the British churches, was built of stone, may have been connected with the family of our Saint. Shall we imagine its erection the work of the British prince, and his son baptized, and praying there? Or the fruit of the return of the Saint from Rome, when, as his Cathedral at Whithern was built of stone, a corresponding work of piety was performed, in the rebuilding the Church of his native district. Anyhow, if such, as is by no means improbable, be the age of the Church, and this the birthplace of St. Ninian, we cannot but connect them with each other.

The very circumstance that Christians were living surrounded by a heathen population, assisted them to realize that they were a distinct people, enjoying peculiar privileges, and under especial obligations, separated from the world, as in profession, so in duties and in destinies. It was a state which gave a vivid force to the language of the New Testament, and a manifest visibility to the Church; and their faith may well be supposed to have been united to personal earnestness

and conviction, to actual renunciation of the world, and a life corresponding to their calling. Such the father of Ninian is said to have been ; “one of such faith and merit, as to be thought worthy of a son through whom the deficiencies in the faith of his own people might be supplied, and a distinct tribe (the Southern Picts) brought to a participation in the mysteries of our Holy religion.”

His mother has been supposed to be one of a family of Saints. The notion is not unnatural. In those days, when the few names we know are those of Saints, we should wish to imagine that they, at least, knew, and were connected with, each other. And the instances in sacred history, the selection of families for privileges, the rewarding the children for the piety of their parents, and the obvious effects of association, common education, and mutual intercession, would lead us to think it likely. All this would suggest the notion, till it passed into a probability, and guesses became reports, and their very likelihood made men believe them. Thus one would account for the tradition, that the mothers of St. Ninian and St. Patrick, whose name is said to have been Conch, or Conchessa, were sisters of St. Martin of Tours ; thus uniting, by the ties of blood, these holy men. This statement, as regards the mother of St. Ninian, is found in a MS. Catalogue of Saints, at Louvain, and in Hector Boethius, and other later writers, of little authority. But to say nothing of the improbability that the daughters of a Roman officer, in Pannonia or Italy, should have married two Britons, the life of St. Aelred would be decisive against it. It is not to be supposed that he should not have known it, had it in his day been matter of probable tradition. Yet he

not only omits it, but implies that St. Ninian's knowledge of St. Martin arose from the Life of the Saint, by Sulpicius.

A brother is mentioned by St. Aelred, in the later part of St. Ninian's life, as his companion in his episcopal travels in Galloway. His name was Plebeius ; and he is spoken of as his equal in sanctity. He, probably, was one who stayed in his father's house, and on the return of Ninian from Rome, became his fellow-labourer in the conversion of their countrymen, and his helper, by example and admonition, in personal holiness..

Born of such parents, our Saint "was in infancy regenerated in the sacred waters of Baptism." So his biographer begins his history—with the first element of spiritual life, the source of all his graces ; and very beautifully does he describe the preservation of the purity then imparted. We might, indeed, wish to know the circumstances by which the youthful Saint was surrounded ; the events which befel him, and the temptations he surmounted ; but it seems as if we were to view him as Angels might love to do, in his true spiritual condition, looking only to the Divine work in him, not to those temporary and earthly accidents by which it was carried out ; for of them no record is left us. It is this inward life only which St. Aelred records, and the graces in which it developed itself. We must imagine the outward circumstances of his condition as best we may.

"The wedding garment," he says, "which he then put on," that pure bright clothing of the soul by the gifts of grace, which the white robes of the new-baptized figured, "he preserved unsullied." Such was his special blessedness ; as one of those virgin souls which

follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. "Victorious over his faults"—those tendencies to evil which remain in the soul, like the Canaanites in Israel, to exercise the Christian warrior in watchfulness and obedience—"he presented it, spotless as it was, in the presence of Christ. And coming thus pure for the gift of Confirmation, he deserved, by the sanctity of his character, to have, as the enlightener of his holy heart, that Holy Spirit whom at first he had received to purify it."

"Under this Divine Guide, whilst still a child, yet with no childish mind, he shrunk from everything contrary to religion, from all that was opposed to chastity, to right conduct, or the laws of truth ; and ceased not to cultivate with the understanding of a man all that was of the law, of grace, of good report, whatever was of service to his neighbour and acceptable to God."

The circumstances of this holy childhood we must imagine—the examples of religious parents, the blessedness of a house where no sentiment unfavourable to piety was ever heard, the training of a saintly mother, his first lisping prayers, his reverend introduction to the Church. His first lessons in sacred reading, his little playmates, his youthful trials, his first schooling ; of these we only know that their influence issued in his sanctification and growth in grace. One means of this, St. Aelred specially intimates—the study of Holy Scripture, that meditative study which is the only way to let its truths take a deep and sure root in the heart.

"Blessed," his Life proceeds, "was he whose delight was in the Law of the Lord ; in His Law did he meditate day and night. He was like a tree planted

by the water side, which brought forth his fruit in due season."

This fruit was abundantly produced in the after-life of St. Ninian. Let us observe the preparation for it ; the early practice of meditating on Holy Scripture, by withdrawing the thoughts from dissipating objects, and calmly and silently turning them to God ; dwelling upon His word, and extracting from it all its sweetness. This is that studying, exercising one's self in, meditating, thinking on it, which we hear so much of in the Psalms. It is very important to accustom children to this practice, that they may not merely read over certain portions of Scripture, but, taking a few verses, dwell on them in silence, endeavouring to enter into their meaning, to realize what they contain, and apply it to themselves. "To read little and think much," is a rule of Bishop Taylor's.

But in subordination to this sacred reading and meditation, we cannot doubt that Ninian had all those advantages of secular learning which Britain afforded ; and these were not inconsiderable. At the neighbouring town of Lugubalia, our Carlisle, he would have the means of acquiring the preparatory learning of the encyclical course,¹ as no doubt the military establishments in the neighbourhood would induce even a higher class of teachers than ordinary to resort thither.

At York, which was in turns with London the seat of government, still greater opportunities would be afforded for completing his secular studies ; and the zeal and earnestness with which he would avail himself of them, his after history will abundantly testify.

¹ See Life of St. German, No. IX. of this series, pp. 14, 15.

Of his character in this part of his life St. Aelred writes, describing it as the fruit which in its season was brought forth from his continual meditation on the divine law, and the purifying and enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit. "He brought forth his fruit in due season," he says, "fulfilling in riper years what he had with the utmost devotion learnt in youth. His devout reverence for Churches was wonderful ; wonderful his affection for his companions. He was temperate in food, sparing in words, assiduous in reading. His manners were engaging, he abstained from jesting, and ever subjected the flesh to the spirit."

CHAPTER III.

St. Ninian's Riper Years.

PROCEEDING (we may well suppose) from this spiritual mind, and the fruit of it, was that mental energy and resolution which soon distinguished him. Indeed it could not fail to be so. It is matter of common observation, how remarkably the understanding of a poor and uneducated man is developed by religious earnestness. Such a one is awakened from sluggish indifference. The end of his being is set before him, and he feels that he has duties to discharge. The value of Christian knowledge begins to be appreciated, meditation on divine truths expands the faculties, and leads him to see the connexion of religious ideas ; and love of the Object of Whom something is known, creates a holy eagerness to know more.

The young and noble Briton, with few advantages

indeed, yet earnestly desirous to use those few, had more given. He began in careful self-government, unfeigned reverence for Holy things, in sweetness of temper and purity of heart. The Holy Spirit whose first fruits were love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self control, imparted in due season and fuller measure his sevenfold gifts. Such is the true course of attaining divine wisdom. Holy Scripture, in enumerating these gifts, mentions first that which is the highest, and therefore the last attained ; in the actual order they are inverted, and become the steps of wisdom ; first is *fear*, the beginning of wisdom, fear of offending God and losing our souls ; then *reverence* for every manifestation of the Divine will and His truth ; hence *knowledge* imparted to the docile heart ; then *counsel* guiding us to choose our course each day aright ; then resoluteness and *strength* to adhere to it ; *understanding* readily to discern the Divine will and to enter into the meaning of His words ; and lastly, as the crowning point, *wisdom* in the contemplation and perception of the highest truth.

Far different in its origin is that unpractical temper which would treat the truths of our most Holy Faith as matters of mere intellectual knowledge, and seek to know what is and what may be said about them, in a curious and disputatious spirit, tampering with most sacred things. Such a temper can only end in darkness, ignorance, and error, even if it retains the outward expression of the truth ; for it is quite compatible with the neglect of relative duties, self-indulgence, angry passions, and gross habitual violations of the divine law. Nay, from its offensiveness to Almighty God, and profane familiarity in His most Holy Presence, and the hardening of a heart which has been

accustomed to close the affections and the will against the most influential truths, it is most likely to lead to falling away from grace and final departure from God.

But far different was the case of St. Ninian ; humility, purity, and love, were the elements of his character. In him holiness of heart was the principle which led to an earnest desire after divine knowledge. There was One Supreme Object of his affections, and on that same Object his thoughts would ever be fixed : where the heart is kept in the love of God, the mind will turn to the knowledge of Him. And it was the working of this simple principle which determined the course of his life. He had been taught the principles of the faith, and he sought to realize more and more what is revealed respecting the Heavenly Father, and the Eternal Son and the Holy Ghost. He was constant in drinking in at the fountain of Eternal Life in the Scriptures, and tracing there the manifestations of the truth ; and the result was a yearning after a more exact knowledge of Religious Truth, after that Truth which would be consistent with itself, and harmonize with the statements of Holy Writ.

“Before the mind,” it has been said, “has been roused to reflection and inquisitiveness about its own acts and impressions, it acquiesces, if religiously trained, in that practical devotion to the Blessed Trinity, and implicit acknowledgement of the Divinity of Son and Spirit, which Holy Scripture at once teaches and exemplifies.” “But as the intellect is cultivated and expanded, it cannot refrain from the attempt to analyze the vision which influences the heart, and the Object in which it centres. Nor does it stop here, till it has, in some sort, succeeded in expressing in words, what has all along been a principle both of the affections and of practical obedience.”

Such seems to have been the state of St. Ninian's mind ; and a most critical period it was in his spiritual history. For whereas the Divine arrangement is, to provide, by the gradual teaching of the Church, that knowledge which the religious mind desires, the circumstances of the British Church at that time failed to supply it. His heart would have responded to the notes of truth, but they were not truly and clearly heard.

It is not a pleasing task to depreciate the estimate which may have been formed of the religious condition of Britons at any period ; but a writer of St. Ninian's life cannot avoid the subject ; it stands full in his way, for the whole of our history turns upon the fact that the teaching of the British Church at that time was very imperfect and erroneous. His biographer is explicit on this point, and the evidence from other sources inclines the same way. Bede's statement as to the prevalence of Arianism, does not imply merely that when the British bishops consented to the suppression of the true doctrine at Ariminum, our church, like the rest of Christendom, wondered to find itself Arian. On the contrary, he speaks of a peculiar prevalence of error here ; an infection of Arianism first, and that followed by every form of heresy ; and the cause he assigns for it in the fickleness of the national character, would lead us to expect what he intimates, the inconsiderate reception of errors, and the want of any sound or stable teaching of the truth ; "*novi semper aliquid audire gaudenti, et nihil certi firmiter obtinenti.*"

Nor is it at all inconsistent with this, to believe that the Bishops adhered to the Nicene formulary, and that such was the profession of the British Church gene-

rally. In 353, they had unwillingly yielded at Ariminum, but in 363, St. Athanasius, in his letter to Jovian, enumerates them among a long list of nations who acknowledged the Creed of Nice. Persons might agree to the form in which the Catholic doctrine was expressed, and feel shocked at the idea of separating themselves from the faith and communion of the whole Church, and yet not have any deep hold on the truth itself, or, when they came to explain what they meant, any accurate knowledge of it. We may well imagine more active minds openly Arianizing ; more religious and less intellectual ones obscure and inconsistent in their statements, and quite unfit to teach dogmatically ; and this would coincide with the fact of the Bishops submitting under their trials to an Arianizing formula.

St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom have repeatedly, indeed, been referred to, as witnessing to the orthodoxy of the British Church, but the passages really bear very slightly on the subject, and rather suggest a different view ; for in each case the mention of Britain is introduced to establish the universal prevalence of the practice they are speaking of ; it existed even in Britain ; and Britons were regarded as very exiles from the rest of the world. "The Gospel has prevailed over heathenism," argues St. Chrysostom ;¹ "besides the Scythians, Moors, and Indians, even the British Isles have felt its power, and churches and altars are established there." "That it is not lawful to have a brother's wife, resounded even in Britain," besides other remote and barbarous countries. Again, in a passage more to the point, of which the beauty itself

¹ St. Chrys. tom. 10. 638, tom. 1. 575, tom. 3. 71, Ed. Ben. are the references made by Stillingfleet.

will be an excuse for quoting it at length, speaking of the study of the Holy Scriptures, he compares them to a "Paradise of Delight, not like that of Eden confined to one place, but filling the whole earth, and extending to the utmost bounds of the habitable world. 'Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world.' Go to the Indians," he says, "on whom the rising sun first looks ; to the Ocean, to those British Isles (so does he speak of us) ; sail to the Euxine ; go to far southern climes ; everywhere will you hear all professing the philosophy of the Scriptures ; with different voice, but no different faith ; the tongues discordant, but the minds in unison."

But beautiful as the passage is, and comforting as the sentiment it contains, yet it is much too general and rhetorical in its style, to found any accurate view upon. The passage quoted from St. Jerome¹ is from a letter from SS. Paula and Eustochia to St. Marcella, wishing her to come to visit the holy places in Palestine. Their spiritual guide, St. Jerome, was supposed to have composed it, and so it passed under his name, but the Benedictine editors are of opinion that it was not written by him. "Christians," they say, "from all the world visit those sacred places. The Briton separated from our world, if he has made any progress in religion, leaving the setting sun, seeks a place known to him only by report and the mention of it in Scripture."

There does not seem in these passages anything to oppose the distinct statement of Bede, as to the prevalence of error. Their tone would rather lead us to

¹ Ep. ad. Marc. tom. 4. p. 2. 441, Ed. Ben. There are several other passages in Jerome to the same effect.

think that the British Church was not very highly esteemed by the rest of Christendom. And quite consistent with this was their condition, when the Bishops in vain endeavoured to resist the progress of Pelagianism. The life of St. Ninian certainly represents the state of the Church to have been such that he could find no complete teaching of the truth, and that it was on account of the errors which prevailed, that he returned as a missionary among them.

As respects schools for theological teaching, there does not seem to be evidence of any previous to the visit of St. Germanus, except perhaps the monastery of Benchor ; and it is doubtful whether this existed at the time of which we are speaking. That there were such schools, however, is not questioned. Indeed, there were among the contemporaries of Ninian, some whose character for learning was acknowledged throughout the Church. Pelagius and Cælestius, sad as is the remembrance attached to their names, were men of distinguished talents and learning. The former, born 354, it has been said, was educated at Benchor, and became superior of it in 404.¹ His abilities and accomplishments were recognized by the best and greatest Doctors ; he was on terms of familiar intercourse and correspondence with SS. Jerome, Augustine, and Paulinus, and highly esteemed and loved by them. The writings of Cælestius, a native of Scotland or Ireland, before he became heretical, were universally admired for their orthodoxy, learning, and virtuous tendency. Somewhat later, St. Patrick flourished, and Fastidius and Faustus later still.

But even if there were schools of theological learn-

¹ Usher de Prim. B. E. p. 207.

ing where such men were trained, of what use could they be, if they did not hold that faith which it was their duty to teach? There may be existing in a country an ample establishment of places of education for every age and every rank, yet what are they worth if the truth has departed? It is the body when the spirit has fled; the salt without its savour; the lamp unsupplied with oil. It is worse. Not teaching the truth must be training the mind in error. And it is not wonderful, though Britain about this time did send out men of distinguished talents, that those who did not humbly seek instruction elsewhere were more or less heretical. Pelagius and Cælestius were almost contemporary with Ninian and Patrick. How remarkable is the different issue of the histories of these fellow-countrymen. Ninian, (and as some say, Patrick too,) with little name for learning, and in their lifetime probably little known in this world, pursue the course of humility and obedience, seek the City for no earthly object, but for the inestimable pearl, the knowledge of Christ—cultivating a saintly character, and prepared at the bidding of their superiors to leave the privileges, and happiness there enjoyed, for the arduous office of converting their heathen and barbarous countrymen. Pelagius and Cælestius, passing from, it may be, the more civilized parts of the island, looked up to, even in Rome, as distinguished men, enjoy the society and esteem of the learned and the saintly—attain name and distinction in the Church—follow their own ways, and leave their memories branded with the awful note of heresy. Of Pelagius's numerous works scarcely a fragment remains. "I went by and lo! he was gone; I sought him but his place could no where be found." "They are like the chaff which the wind scattereth away from

the face of the earth." But "the righteous live for evermore, and his memory is blessed."

But to pursue the course of St. Ninian's history. The time we are speaking of is probably prior to the year 380, and so before the Council of Constantinople A.D. 381, had finally destroyed the Arian party. Then it was that the earnest desire of learning the true faith took entire possession of St. Ninian's mind. He sought instruction from the best teachers his own Church afforded, but could not obtain it. He felt their teaching was imperfect. It did not harmonize with what he knew was true, nor accord with those Scriptures which he had ever studied. He had a teacher within—that inward and divinely kindled Light which illumines the mind of many an unlettered peasant, and gives him a real perception and understanding of the truths of the Creed, and of the sense of Holy Scripture. He had learned the elementary truths of the Gospel, and a religious life had impressed them on his mind as living realities. Thus much light was thrown on the meaning of those Holy Scriptures on the thought of which he had lived from a child. For the knowledge of the Rule of Faith, as St. Aelred, with the primitive fathers, calls the system of Christian Doctrine, was an entering into the very mind of the Spirit, which is the true key to the understanding of His most holy Words. That mind is expressed in various forms, pervading every part of Psalm and Prophecy, History and Epistle ; and we shall best understand them, not by critical investigations into the meaning of words, but by learning more of the mind of the Author ; just as one who knows but in a very slight degree the views of a writer, will apprehend his meaning with readiness and certainty, while one who weighs the words and criticises their

force with the utmost jealousy, will find them full of ambiguity and uncertainty, and at last arrive at a doubtful and probably erroneous conclusion. The Scriptures had been the subject of his constant study and meditation from early youth—of a practical, devout study, that they might be the guide of his life and the model he aimed to imitate, and now the hidden things they contain were being revealed to him, and continually more light thrown upon them, as they were made more practical, and connected with the truths of the Creed.

With this inward perception of Divine Truth, St. Ninian could perceive the inconsistencies of the teaching of the British Ecclesiastics, and its discrepancy from the Scriptures. In him were the words made good, "I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep Thy commandments."

Disappointed of help where he most naturally and dutifully looked for it, what was he to do? It was not perhaps to be expected that he should be led into a perfect knowledge of the truth by the light within, independently of external teaching. In the case indeed of an accomplished and highly illuminated teacher, or one precluded from the means of instruction, or as a gift of special grace, one would not presume to limit its possible range. In such cases the development of truth by holy and loving meditation, and devout study of Holy Scripture, may surpass conception. But to St. Ninian the means of further instruction were open, though at a great and trying sacrifice, that of forsaking his home and all that was dear to him on earth.

Before, however, this step was taken, whilst he sought for further teaching, we may conceive his

trials to have been very great. There was the temptation to indifference, to seek no more of that which he already had in a larger measure than most around him, and to turn the thirstings of his ardent mind to those objects, (such as they were,) which occupied the thoughts and aims of most of the young nobles of his time ; and the checks and difficulties he met with would suggest themselves as reasons for such a course. But he was not disposed to feed on the husks of swine after having tasted of that which was sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, more to be desired than gold and all manner of riches—the knowledge of Him who passeth knowledge.

On the other hand, there was the temptation to rest in what he knew, in intellectual self-satisfaction, to feel pride in superior attainments, to point out the errors of others, and argue on the illogicalness of their conclusions—to shew that they could not prove what they maintained, and to make a display. But surely no earnest mind could do this. It was the truth which he desired to know ; to be thought to know it was matter of indifference to him. To prove others wrong could but be an occasion of sorrow, unless it aided himself and them in attaining truth.

A more subtle temptation remained ; to throw himself on the resources of his own mind, to trust to the deductions of his own intellect, either from the text of Holy Scriptures or the doctrines he had already been taught. For this he was too humble. The immensity and awfulness of the subject, and the consciousness of his own imperfections, both of will and understanding, might well make him draw back from so perilous and uncertain a work. Reverence would shrink from touching with a young and uninformed

mind subjects which it only regarded as objects of veneration. Moses was bidden to put his shoes from off his feet before he approached the Holy One. The cherubim cover their heads against the dazzling brightness of the earthly manifestations of Divine glory. It is only where the mind has been trained into the knowledge of the faith, and is influenced by great sanctity and humility, that it can safely use the reason in matters of faith. Others must be content, and if they have the elements of holiness, will be desirous, only to be taught by those of higher attainments than themselves.

What then was he to do ? St. Aelred thus describes his state. "He intently applied his mind to the study of Holy Scripture ; and when he had, in their way, learnt the Rule of Faith from all the most learned of his own nation, being possessed of a discerning mind, he perceived, according to the understanding he had himself by Divine inspirations gained from Scripture, that they fell far short of perfection. Hence his mind was thrown into uncertainty ; and unable to rest in incomplete knowledge, his heart swelled within him ; he sighed ; his heart grew hot within him, and while he was thus musing the fire kindled. What, he said, shall I do ? I have sought in my own country for Him whom my soul loveth, and have not found Him. I will arise ! I will compass sea and land ! I will seek that truth which my soul loveth !"

In this state of mind Rome naturally presented itself as the place to which he should have recourse. She, who for centuries had been the queen of nations, was now attaining a greater glory, as the chief Church of Christendom, the centre of the Christian world—the home of faith and devotion—the point to which all that

was great and good drew as to a safe refuge. High as was her bearing in the eye of the world, yet greater still was the interest which attached to her in the eyes of a Christian. Man saw her noble edifices, her wealth, her power ; yet that outward kingdom and glory was but a shell to guard an inner principle of life, and was now breaking in pieces to allow of its development. Here was a Church which the chief of the Apostles had founded and taught, and for which they had shed their blood ; a Church which had carefully preserved the faith as it had received it, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in it. To her, as a guide, the chief writers of the western Church had directed those who sought to know the truth ; and during the long Arian struggle, she had been the main support of the faith ; and the purity of her belief, and the completeness of her teaching were known and acknowledged by all.

“To this Church,” St. Irenæus had said long ago, “on account of its higher original, all Churches must have recourse.” And Tertullian, “Go to the Apostolic Churches to learn the faith. If thou art near to Italy, thou hast Rome, where we also have an authority close at hand. Blessed Church ! on which the Apostles poured their doctrine with their blood. Let us see what she hath learned, what she hath taught.” This was the Church, which the Council of Antioch shortly before had called “the School of the Apostles and the Metropolis of Religion ;” and Theodosius in an edict, published just at this time, A. D. 380, respecting faith in the ever blessed Trinity, commanded that all the nations under his rule “should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St. Peter to the Romans, which faithful tradition had preserved, which

was now professed by Pope Damasus, and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria."

These are the sentiments St. Aelred attributes to St. Ninian, in a soliloquy which embodies the views that might naturally be supposed to influence him. "I have in my own country sought Him whom my soul loveth, and have not found Him. I will arise. I will compass sea and land to seek the truth which my soul longs for. But is there need of so much toil? Was it not said to Peter, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it? In the faith of Peter then there is nothing defective, obscure, imperfect; nothing against which evil doctrine or perverted sentiments, the gates as it were of Hell, could prevail. And where is the Faith of Peter but in the See of Peter? Thither certainly I must go, that leaving my country and my relations, and my father's house, I may be thought worthy to behold with inward eye the fair beauty of the Lord, and to be guarded by His Temple." And of the temptation which would draw him back. "The deceitful prosperity of life smiles on me—the vanity of the world is attractive—the love of my relations wiles me to stay—difficulties and personal sufferings deter. But he who loveth father and mother, saith the Lord, more than Me, is not worthy of Me, and he that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. I have learnt too that they who despise Kings' palaces, attain to heavenly kingdoms."

Such were his feelings. And should it seem strange to speak of a young Briton as making any great sacrifice in leaving a distinction almost nominal in a remote country, regarded as scarcely belonging to the

Roman world, for the metropolis of the empire, the seat of refinement and luxury, of taste, literature, and intellect, of all which was calculated to engage the interest and sympathy of a Christian—should it be thought that the change was one to be gladly caught at—let it be considered that it was not the leaving Britain for Rome merely, which indicated the devotion of St. Ninian. This might have been done from the lowest motives, ambition, curiosity, pleasure, and might not have implied the tearing asunder of any ties ; as many have made pilgrimages from the mere love of wandering. The circumstances and the end determine the character of the action. The sacrifice of worldly interest might have been small ; but it was a sacrifice of all he had, and that without any earthly recompense, and He who rewarded those who left their father, and all that they had, though but an interest in a fisherman's poor stock, would have accepted him.

Relatively speaking however the sacrifice was considerable. If the eldest son, he would hold the rank of Tanist, as the destined successor to the reigning king ; and his country was no longer, as we have seen, that in which the captive Prince had wondered the Romans could envy his poor cottage. Many of its Princes possessed considerable wealth ; in their days of independence they had coined gold and silver, and in all probability still continued to possess hereditary revenues. And Roman manners had introduced even into Britain objects which that wealth might purchase. Their elegant and costly works, their notoriously extravagant luxuries, show that Ninian could have found ways of expending his inheritance which the children of this world would have envied ; baths, and costly marbles, inlaid pavements, and all the elegancies of art. For

objects of ambition he might have aimed, at least, to be the chief among his countrymen ; or by engaging in the service of Rome have risen, as other provincials had done, to high distinction. Even the imperial purple was not beyond the grasp of an ambitious spirit. The British legions about this very time made Maximus Emperor, and the great Constantine has been said to be a native Briton.

But these things were seen in their true colours by Ninian. He had renounced them in his Baptism, and his heart had never returned to them. The world, with its charms of pleasure, its prospects of wealth or ambition, had no hold on him. His real trial was from a deeper attachment—affection to his friends, a sacrifice made more painful in proportion as Christian piety increased his love to them. Almighty God seems ever, as it were, to retain a hold upon us, so as to be able to inflict sharp pain for our correction, or give us the opportunity of overcoming it from love to Him ; and this especially through our affections. Men hardened by ambition, covetousness, and indifference to religion, yet retain deep and tender love for wife or child ; and the loss of them, or the sorrows which befall them, are continually means of awakening them to a sense of religion. So in those who for Christ's sake have weaned their affections from all other earthly objects, their very progress in goodness, while it gives them strength to forsake even what they best love for Him, and keeps them from setting their affections on them, yet makes their love more tender and deep, and the pain of separation in itself greater, entirely though it be compensated for by the overflowings of Divine consolations.

Such seems to have been St. Ninian's chief struggle ; but the remembrance of his Lord's calls, and the great-

ness of his promises, prevailed, and he went out where Christ seemed to call him.

It has been reported that his father had at first wished him to keep in the way of life which his birth and circumstances naturally pointed out, and that it was with great unwillingness that he yielded to his son's desire to give up the world for a life devoted to religion. This however must have been earlier, when St. Ninian gave himself up in his own country to the pursuit of religious truth. Still there is a peculiar pang when a final step is taken, which breaks off entirely hope which may against hope have been secretly cherished; still more when that step took from their home him whose distinguishing sweetness and affectionateness must have made him beloved, whilst he was revered. But all these considerations sank before the great object he had in view, and he left his home, and as his biographers say, "like Abraham, he went out from his country and his father's house."

Two other reasons have been assigned for his visiting Rome. The first is a conjecture of Alford's, that he went to take advantage of the schools, the original of our universities, which had been established on so large a scale, and with so systematic a discipline by Valentinian. They had been instituted in 370, and with a special view to the education of provincials. It is plain, however, that this view is quite inconsistent with the picture given us by St. Aelred. It was for no advantages of secular learning that the humble and affectionate Ninian left his parents and his home. It was the need of religious teaching, of that knowledge which is life eternal, which caused and justified his sacrifice. Besides, the students were not allowed to continue after they were twenty years of age, which would make

Ninian so young on his going there, as to give an entirely different character to his visit. He would in that case appear to have been sent, as it were, to the university by his parents. It is enough to say that this is purely a conjecture, and not only without foundation, but inconsistent with the earlier histories of the Saint. Camerarius again represents his visit as occasioned by the rules of the Culdees, to whom he supposed him to belong, who required those who were to be consecrated Bishops among them, to have previously visited the *Limina Apostolorum*. But this is apparently an anachronism, as the Culdees do not appear in history till above a century after St. Ninian's time.

Leland too places the visit to Rome after he had been engaged in missionary labours in Britain; but he gives no authorities, and mentions the subject so incidentally, and without noticing the different account given in the received Lives, that we should rather suspect him of a mistake in memory as to the Saint's history, than of so slightly opposing the best authorities for the history.

CHAPTER IV.

St. Ninian's Journey to Rome.

THE date of this journey we cannot accurately determine. It was certainly before the year 385; for the Pope by whom St. Ninian was consecrated and sent as a missionary to Britain was not the one in whose Pontificate he arrived in Rome. St. Siricius was his consecrator, and he was elected Pope on the death of St. Damasus in 385. Prior then to this date, and during the Popedom of St. Damasus, was the time of

St. Ninian's arrival; and we should conjecture that it was prior to the year 383, as there is not in his Life any reference to the convulsion occasioned by the revolt of Maximus, which introduced great changes into Britain and Gaul, by the emigration of a considerable portion of the British nation to Brittany. Perhaps 381 may be conjectured, when he was twenty-one years of age or upwards.

By the assistance of the Itineraries we may trace the route by which Ninian would travel from his northern home, near Carlisle, to the great city. The road began either on the south of the Solway, or in Annandale, and ran through Carlisle by Old Penrith, where a noble military way may still be traced, thence by the vale of the Eden to Brough, and over the dreary hills of Stainmoor. Here Ninian would have the last glimpse of those mountains within sight of which he had spent his youth, and the remembrance of which, with all the associations of friends and kindred, is so deeply engraven on the heart. He would cross the moorlands and travel along a road which runs by Bowes and Catterick, and which we still enjoy as an inheritance from our Roman conquerors, and so to York.

This was, as we have said, the second city of Britain, the residence of the governors, and the See of an Archbishop, and here most probably the young prince would receive commendatory letters to other Catholic Bishops, and particularly to Rome. Hence he would proceed by the great line of Watling street to London, and Sandwich. This was the port from which they sailed for Boulogne. Passing through Rheims, then an episcopal city, he would come to Lyons, that first cradle of the Church of Gaul, consecrated by the

memory of her martyrs, and her sainted Bishop, St. Irenæus. It was now a great city, but more interesting to St. Ninian, as it was now probably presided over by one who, during the period of Arian trials, had been the firm maintainer of the Catholic faith—St. Justus. He was the friend of St. Ambrose, and Bishop from 370 to 381, when he resigned his office and retired to Egypt, to embrace a monastic life, and end his days in devotion and peace.

The direct road from Lyons to Milan over the Great St. Bernard, was steep, narrow, and impassable for carriages; another from Vienne by the Little St. Bernard, was more circuitous but easier; they united at Aosto. His Biographer especially mentions that he crossed the Gallic Alps, to impress us, as it would seem, with the arduousness of a journey, terrible from its natural difficulties, and dangerous from the robbers who infested it; for not many years before St. Martin had been attacked here, and saved from murder only by a miracle.

He now entered Italy, and came among cities and Churches associated with the names and lives of Saints distinguished in the history of religion; and these would be the objects on which his thoughts would fix. Nature indeed spread before him her most sublime and then her loveliest scenery. The world presented riches and splendour. He might encounter on the road the magnificent equipages and retinue of the wealthy Roman, coaches of solid silver, mules with trappings embossed with gold, horsemen preceding to clear the way, and a train of baggage and attendants, cooks, slaves, eunuchs, marshalled like an army. But he was proof against these seductive imaginations; the *nil admirari* is not so effectually produced by any philoso-

phy as by the calm recollection of the Christian, whose guarded eye does not allow him to forget the shadowy nature of what is seen, and the reality of those things which are not seen ; and he would esteem above all the beauties of nature or of art, the Church in each place he came to, and the pious Christians whom he might meet with.

And there was one of these places which was connected in an interesting way with his own future history—Vercelli, through which the road from Lyons to Milan passed. Its late Bishop, St. Eusebius, had introduced here, for the first time in the western Church, the union of the clerical and monastic life, which was afterwards adopted by St. Ninian. St. Eusebius had died ten years before, but the system was still kept up ; and it may not be out of place here to give St. Ambrose's description of it, as it will by anticipation describe the episcopal life of St. Ninian.

The Bishop and Clergy lived together in one house, shut out from the world, and adopting the way of life of the Egyptian monks, having all things in common, and devoting their days and nights to continued prayer and praise, labour and study. "Can any thing," says the Saint, speaking of their society, "can any thing be more admirable than their way of life, in which there is nothing to fear, and every thing worthy of imitation ; where the austerity of fasting is compensated by tranquillity and peace of mind, supported by example, made sweet by habit, and cheered by virtuous occupations. A life not disturbed by temporal cares, nor distracted by the tumults of the world, nor interrupted by idle visits, nor relaxed by intercourse with the world." Thus, under the eye of the Bishop himself, Clergy were trained up, of whom he personally knew

the blamelessness, piety, and zeal ; while their characters were so esteemed, that other Churches sought their Bishops from him, and many distinguished Prelates were sent out from his school.

In after days, St. Ninian, on the coast of Galloway, might recall to his mind the time when he had seen Vercelli, and the first model of a system which, with some modifications, was soon generally embraced, both by missionaries and in settled churches, and is the original of the chapters of our cathedrals.

The road brought him from Lyons to Milan, which from the year 303 had been the chief residence of the Emperors of the west, and soon assumed the splendour of an imperial city. In the number and beauty of the houses, the gay and polished manners of the people, and the magnificence of the public buildings, it seemed to rival, and not suffer in comparison from the proximity of, Rome. In this place St. Ambrose was Bishop, and even to the eyes of the world that great man would appear the most important object in Milan. The popular voice had taken him from a high civil position to be their Bishop, and he was such an one that Theodosius recognized in him a realizing of all a Bishop ought to be. His people were devoted to him, and his influence could withstand and control the highest earthly sovereigns. And yet so simple was his life that Ninian might have seen or conversed with him. He gave himself wholly to the work of the ministry. Constant in prayer, by day and night, he slept little and fasted daily. Yet he was accessible to all. St. Augustine generally found him surrounded by crowds of persons and full of business. His time which was not thus occupied, and it was but little, was given to refreshment or reading, and he read where any one might

come to him ; no one was hindered, nor was it usual for them to be announced, so that Augustine would come and stay in the room, and leave again, unwilling to interrupt him. He preached every Sunday, and Ninian may have listened to that eloquence which melted the stubborn heart of him who afterwards was St. Augustine, and which we may read with so much admiration.

But Rome was his object, and he hastened forwards. The Via Flaminia brought him to the shore of the Adriatic, to the fatal Ariminum, connected with recollections most distressing to every Christian, and to a Briton still more so, as the scene where the Bishops of his Church had fallen into an allowance of heresy. But better days were coming to the Church ; for whilst the Eastern Bishops had met at Constantinople, and republished the Nicene Faith ; in the year 381, perhaps the very one in which St. Ninian was travelling through Italy, councils were held at Aquileia and Milan, where St. Ambrose was most distinguished for his zeal for the maintenance of the true Faith. Keeping along the coast to the Metaurus, the road there turned inland, and crossing the passes of the Apennines, led on to Rome.

And what a scene must Rome have presented to St. Ninian as he beheld it on his approach, and saw the wide gilded roof of the Capitol, or the gorgeous splendour of the Palatium rising above the innumerable buildings which surrounded them. Or as he passed through the Forums, or under the Temples or Basilicas which overhung its streets, how vast must it have appeared in the multitudes of its people, and the grandeur of its edifices. Above a million, some say many millions of inhabitants, were enclosed within a circuit of

twenty miles. The luxurious villas and gardens which were spread around it, hemmed in the portion occupied by dwellings, so that the houses rose to a tremendous and dangerous height, far exceeding the limit of 70 feet, which law had imposed ; yet these were broken by wide places around on which stood the most magnificent specimens of ancient architecture ; and porticos, arches, columns, and statues, were seen on every side. The palaces of the nobles, now numbered at nearly 2000, from their enormous establishments of slaves, were little towns of splendid architecture, with marble columns and gilded statues, each comprising within itself "every thing which could be subservient to use or luxury, forums, temples, fountains, baths, porticos, with shady groves and artificial aviaries." An overgrown population of poor and idle citizens occupied at an enormous rent the different floors and rooms of the crowded houses, intent only on the daily doles of food and the public entertainments of the Circus.

The pomp of heathen worship still remained, though its privileges and revenues were diminished. Half the senate at least still adhered to the ancient superstitions, and garlands, processions, and victims might be seen, whilst the smoke and odour of sacrifices and incense still rose on every side. The rich, unoccupied by political or mercantile pursuits, spent their days in idle and frivolous pleasures, and a continual round of dissipation. There might be seen the rich senator, in elegant and costly dress, making his way through the streets, attended by some fifty slaves ; or sailing in his barge, screened by silken awnings and listening to luxurious music. Their wealth was enormous, and it was seen in their display of gold and silver plate, the magnificence of their establishments, the number of their

slaves, and the lavish expenditure of their exhibitions and public entertainments. Luxury and refinement seemed to have reached their utmost limit, and the great metropolis of the world to be sinking down, worn out by its own effeminacy.

There were, indeed, schools of learning, supported and regulated by the state, and a great university, to which students from every part of the empire resorted, to obtain the advantage of a Roman education ; and the philosophical professor might be known by his peculiar dress. The teachers were for the most part men opposed to the Christian faith, who, by a revived and modified Platonism, explained away the grosser features of Polytheism, and put forward views of philosophy and morals, which, with the utmost zeal and talents, they opposed to the doctrines of the Gospel. Here Ammianus publicly read his admired history, the eloquent and virtuous Symmachus pleaded almost with fanaticism for the toleration of the religion of their fathers ; and the philosophers (as Eunapius and Libanius) published explanations of the popular religion, and attributed miracles to the distinguished leaders of their schools, which had not long before received a temporary patronage under the apostate Julian.

Such were the varied and strange objects which, so far as it was not Christian, Rome presented to the view of the British stranger, who now made his way along its streets. Nor indeed would the Christian community seem exempt from the corruption of the atmosphere in which it lived. Besides the Catholics, we must remember, there were numerous bodies of heretics, especially Manichees, assuming the name of Christians, and sometimes concealing themselves among

them, who endeavoured, by their subtle disputations, and professions of austerity, to gain over converts from the true faith. These were most numerous at Rome, and lived in a miserable way, dispersed through all the quarters of the city, and though professing a severe life, really given up to self-indulgence, and bringing reproach upon their name by their immoralities and crimes. Here might be seen parties of Sarabaites, vagabond and pretended monks, who lived two or three together, under no rule or government, exhibiting pretended sanctity, as a cloak for indulgence, fasting for display, and when a feast came, giving way to excess. Superstition, too, doubtless existed among the people, and vices inconsistent with the religion they professed. For the good, it has been said, are as grains among the chaff; here one and there one from the accident of their position, stand prominently out, and are discerned almost buried in the surrounding mass, which gives its own complexion to the whole. These things would strike the eye of the casual observer, and it might, perhaps, too, surprise one who had not considered that the Church was a net inclosing bad and good, and that the irreligion and superstition of the mass of men would abuse and discredit the holiest system.

If St. Ninian had not thought of this, there would doubtless be much among the Roman Christians to shock and to distress him. That Church he had looked to, as the model of excellence and the guide to truth; to be taught by her he had relinquished home and friends, and now he saw, even in her bosom, and under the very eye of the Saintly Bishop, gross and evident sin. "I know," says St. Augustine, "that there are many who adore sepulchres and pictures;"

and so by superficial or evil-disposed persons, among heretical or pagan contemporaries, the Church was accused of introducing a new idolatry of martyrs and relics, and substituting as objects of divine worship those whose tombs were consecrated by the veneration of the people.¹ "I know," proceeds the Saint, "that there are many who drink to excess on occasion of burials, and make great feasts, under pretence of religion."² Among their testimonies to their generally consistent and virtuous lives, the very heathens we find charging Christians with immorality, with the more earnestness because of its contradicting the rules they professed. Violence, party spirit, ambition, found a place among them. The election of the present Bishop—for at Rome the whole body of Christians had a voice in the choice of their Bishop—had been attended with violence and bloodshed. The clergy were often secular in their habits, endeavouring to gain favour with the rich, and using their influence to obtain legacies; so that the civil power interfered by law to check the evil. The wealthy were infected by the luxury of the age and yielded to the pleasures and dissipation common to their class. It might fall to St. Ninian's lot to witness the sad abuses which were practised on the vigil of some martyr, corrupting the holiest services to evil; abuses such that the celebrations themselves were suppressed by St. Ambrose, and the abuses provided against, by the influence of St. Augustine.

But indeed, how could it be otherwise, when the

¹ As by Eunapius and Faustus the Manichee, quoted by Gibbon, c. 28, notes 60 and 88.

² St. Aug. de Moribus Eccl. Christ. l. c. 34.

world was flocking into the Church. "In speaking against such men," is St. Augustine's answer, "you do but condemn those whom the Church herself condemns, and daily labours to correct, as wicked children. It is one thing that we are commanded to teach, another we are commanded to correct, and forced to tolerate till we can amend it." For the last seventy years the emperors had been, with few exceptions, professed Christians ; they had encouraged the same profession in others, and men influenced by the consideration of worldly interest, and with no serious sense of religion, would outwardly embrace it. And let us not forget that by doing so, faulty as the motive might be, they yet brought themselves and those dependent on them, under a holy discipline, and to the enjoyment of privileges, and inward influences, which might prevail in their children's case if not in their own, and lead them to eternal life. Still this prevalence of an external profession could not but have the effect of lowering the apparent standard of Christian holiness. It needed a counteracting influence, that the Church might still be the light of the world and the salt of the earth ; and it found it in the visible separation from the world, and eminent sanctity of those who followed out their baptismal vows by the relinquishment of all earthly ties, and the professed adoption of a religious life. The Holy virgins and monks it was who now kept alive the flame of piety, and were, so to say, the soul of the Church. And their holiness testified perpetually against the unworthy lives of others. This is ever to be kept in mind when we read (as in St. Jerome or St. Sulpicius) of the evil and worldly lives of the clergy of their time. They had before them high living standards of the devotion and sanctity

suit to the Christian calling, and saw more vividly any departure from it. It was the disciple and biographer of St. Martin, and the monk of Palestine, the admirers and advocates of perfect self-denial, and the ascetic life, who chiefly speak of the evils prevalent among Christians. That they discerned these evils implied that the principle of right, the conscience of the Church, was sensitive and whole. There are ages where Christians so lose the true standard, that they are unconscious of their loss.

This may guard us against misjudging the Church which St. Ninian now visited, whilst in endeavouring to pourtray its real condition, we repeat what contemporaries have said of the evils which existed in it.

Externally indeed the Church of Rome had now attained to great splendour and magnificence. The time had come when the wealth of the nations poured in to her, and "she decked herself with jewels as a bride doth." The very Christians who had endured the last and most trying persecution of Dioclesian, raised up more splendid Churches than he had destroyed. Long before, during her earlier persecutions, the sacred vessels were of gold and silver. Martyrs suffered because they refused to give up the holy trust, and we know the details of them from the very inventories made by the spoilers.¹ If, then, confessorship be an argument for sanctity, and sanctity for a perception of the truth, we have this authority for decking with magnificent adornings the Christian Churches, as the Jewish Temple was by Divine command. In Rome, the Basilicas had been given to the Church, noble oblong buildings, with rows of columns

¹ Bingham, 8. 6. 21.

running lengthwise, and forming, as it were, a nave and aisles. Other Churches were erected over the tombs of Martyrs, where the awful service of the Christian Sacrifice was performed, according to the majestic and simple Liturgy which the Church had received from St. Peter. The taste and magnificence of the present Pope had contributed much to adorning the sacred edifices, and enhancing the grandeur of the services. For the continuous praise of the ever blessed Trinity he had provided for the chaunting of the Psalter night and day, with the Doxology as we now use it. He had built two Basilicas, and given costly offerings of gold and silver vessels to others. Around the altars, lamps of gold, and wax lights in massive candlesticks, burnt by day and night, dispelling the natural light. The perfumed cloud of incense rose up in the solemn service of the Mass. Gold and silver vessels, and precious stones furnished and adorned the Churches, and garlands and flowers hung around ; nay, the devotion of the people made them hang up, on cords of gold, memorials in precious metals of the blessings they had received in answer to their prayers, or through the intercession of the Martyr, over whose grave the Church was raised.¹

Such were the Churches and Services of Rome, and so deeply was St. Ninian influenced by them, that his first work, on returning as a Missionary into Britain, was to build a Church after the Roman fashion, and there with the Faith of the Roman Church, to introduce her custom in the celebration of Divine offices.

¹ Bingham, 8. 8. 2.

There was one object of surpassing interest, to which first he made his way—the Churches where the martyred remains of St. Peter and St. Paul were laid. The body of St. Paul had been buried a little distance from Rome, on the Ostian road, where his Church now stands ; that of St. Peter, on the Vatican, probably by the Jewish Christians who lived in that quarter. Afterwards part of each was laid beside that of the other, in vaults in their respective Churches, that as they were lovely in their lives they might not be divided in death. These were recognized as their burial places at the end of the second century, and at this time, St. Jerome says, “the Bishops of Rome, offered the Holy Sacrifice to God over the revered bones of departed human beings, and considered their tombs as Altars of Christ.” The Vatican, where the more splendid vault and Church were placed, was known as the Confession of St. Peter and the *Limina Apostolorum*. Hither sentiments of devotion drew Christians, at this time, from all parts of the world, emperors, consuls, and generals, says St. Chrysostom, devoutly visited the sepulchres of those who in their lives had been lowly in the world, but were now exalted.

To seem to be, were it only in imagination, brought near to those chiefest of the Apostles, and most blessed Martyrs, must have been esteemed by St. Ninian a singular privilege. It is a natural sentiment which men of all ages are affected by. “We move,” said the philosophic heathen, “in those places where there are, as it were, the very footmarks of those we admire and love. For my own part Athens itself does not so much delight me by exquisite and magnificent works of art, as by calling to mind those greatest

of men ; where each was wont to live, to sit, and to discourse ; and their burial places I look on with the intensest interest." How much more to a Christian to trace in Rome the places which had been consecrated by the footsteps, the blood, the very remains, of the Apostles. To recall the image of St. Paul, the aged prisoner, his deep knowledge of Christian Truth, his zeal, his constraining eloquence, his patience, his charity ;—or of St. Peter, full of love for his Lord, of humility, of readiness to die and to prefer a death of pain for His sake. It was the belief that their spirit and doctrine were preserved here which brought St. Ninian from his distant home. Rome had killed them—Rome for which they had laboured and interceded ; and the blood of Martyrs, like that of their Lord, cries for mercy on their persecutors, and brings blessings on the Church for which they had shed their blood. So they became the life of Rome. Persons taking a mere external view saw this. Rome went to decay, and "like Thebes, Babylon, or Carthage," says the historian of her fall, "its name might have been erased from the earth, if the city had not been animated by a vital principle which again restored her to honour and dominion. Two Jewish teachers," (so he speaks) "a tentmaker and a fisherman, had been executed in the circus of Nero, and five hundred years after their relics were adored as the Palladium of Christian Rome : " and a glory and a kingdom were given to it before which the ancient empire sank into inferiority.

To these shrines St. Ninian came, with a heart full of devout sentiments ; with gratitude that he should have been brought to this great object of his desire ; that he, a Briton, from almost another world, might approach the very remains of the Apostles ; and with

earnest prayers for the furtherance of his designs. "He shed tears," as the simple narrative proceeds, "before the holy relics of the Apostles, as pledges of his devotion, and with many prayers commended his desire to their patronage."

CHAPTER V.

St. Ninian's Life at Rome.

After having thus performed his devotions at the tombs of the Apostles, St. Ninian sought the Pope, and laid before him the object of his journey. It had long been usual for Christians, in travelling from one part of the Church to another, to take with them commendatory letters from the Bishop of their own Church, which should be an evidence of their being in the Catholic Communion, and a recommendation to the Churches which they might visit. Such we suppose St. Ninian to have brought and to have presented to St. Damasus, who had now for nearly twenty years occupied the holy See, having been elected at sixty years of age, in 366. By this aged saint he was most kindly received, and the object of his leaving his home and seeking the Church of Rome, heartily entered into and approved. St. Damasus, himself, was a man of taste and learning. Some of his sacred poems and official letters have come down to us. He was also a great encourager of learned men, and prompted them to undertake works for the service of religion; one especially, the Translation and Commentaries on the Scriptures by St. Jerome, was the fruit of his

suggestions, for which alone he deserves our gratitude. This saint was probably with him about the time St. Ninian came: he resided at Rome for two years, at the wish of the Pope; and assisted him in these last years of his life in writing those important letters, on many nice and important points of doctrine and ecclesiastical rules, which the See of Rome, consulted and appealed to from every part of Christendom, had continually to send out. And it may throw light on the real character of St. Damasus, who is said to have wrought miracles in life and after death, to consider him as supporting under strong unpopularity the austere and simple mannered Jerome, and selecting him as his confidential adviser; and as entering, with the kindness and interest of a father, (for he embraced him, it is said, as his own son,) into the views of the devout Ninian, who, from a simple desire after the knowledge of Christian Truth, had given up all the world had to offer him. For, outwardly, St. Damasus lived in a splendour which emperors might envy, and had a mind which delighted in great and magnificent works. Whilst Christian Bishops in general lived with simplicity, external humility, and often in poverty, the Bishops of Rome were surrounded by pomp and grandeur. But under this external splendour how often in every age has there been concealed a true poverty of spirit and a self-denying life. St. Jerome, who knew well the character of the Pope, and whose sincerity and severe standard of Christian holiness renders his testimony most valuable, designates him as "of holy memory."

St. Ninian was received by him with the utmost kindness, with, as has been said, the affection of a father. He laid open the object for which he had come to Rome;

and how highly does it speak for the deeply devout character of the Pope, now nearly eighty years of age, that he should enter into and approve a course which had about it so much which in other matters we should call romantic. How rarely do we find the aged capable of entering into the feelings of the young, in cases especially, where worldly interests are concerned, and the usual course of action is departed from. The mere natural disposition of old men leads them to look on the self-forgetfulness of the young as a kind of folly, which experience and sobriety of spirit will wean them from. Such is the temper to which intercourse with the world, and the downward and hardening tendencies of our evil nature, incline us, even towards what is right, and good, and noble, in the temperament of the young. But not such is the aged Christian. He has learnt by experience the true value of that Pearl of great price, and the worthlessness of the world's best treasures. In him love has been warmed and deepened ; and self-sacrifice become a practical and habitual principle. So that, whilst he has the discriminating eye which sees the true path of duty, and distinguishes between a course suggested by mere emotion or self-will, and that to which the guidance of the Holy Spirit leads the youthful scholar in the saintly life, he yet is not wanting in the fullest sympathy with all that is noble and disinterested in his spirit. The Christian mind is one in all, and produces a mutual sympathy in those in whom it exists. Diversities of race and climate, of station, age, employment, which swallow up the whole character in others, are but an outside clothing to Christians, and fade away before the unity of that in which the moral being really consists.

And age and youth love to dwell together in sympathy and peace.

Ninian was placed by St. Damasus under the care of teachers, who instructed him systematically in the doctrines of the Faith. He was, as Bede expresses it, *regulariter doctus*. We do not, indeed, know what provision was made for the teaching of Christian doctrine to individuals. It would seem as if, as yet, it had not assumed any very systematic shape. From the first, the teachers (Doctors) formed one class of the Christian ministry. They whose gifts, extraordinary or ordinary, qualified them more especially for the office of instructing others in the Faith, would be employed in preparing converts and catechumens for baptism ; and it seems most probable that they would themselves advance in the study of Holy Scripture, and the Christian writers, and in the further training up of others. And this was one use of the Minor Orders of the clergy, in which, according to the rule of the apostle, they served a sort of probation for the diaconate ; and under the eye of the bishop, and the teaching of the Doctors, prepared themselves for the higher offices. At Alexandria the Church taught all learning, human and divine. In other Churches, secular and preparatory knowledge of the arts and sciences, was learnt from the established heathen institutions ; and Christian knowledge from their own Clergy.

Under the care of his present teachers St. Ninian had every reason to rejoice in the step he had taken. "The youth, full of the spirit of God, perceived that he had not run or laboured in vain, as he now understood that from their unskilful teachers, he and his countrymen had believed many things opposed to sound doctrine." He met with that satisfaction which the mind

feels in the consistency of the truths put before it ; and still more the peace resulting from the confidence which such harmony inspires, that it is indeed the truth itself respecting the Supreme Object of his desire, love, and reverence ; and not a shadow which it grasps instead. And the Holy Scriptures, now explained in their true sense, harmonized with the doctrines inculcated.

The advantages he enjoyed, in this respect, were very great. The Roman church was indeed the school of the true faith, and in its atmosphere heretical teaching was at once discovered. The controvercies of the day had caused the truth on the most essential Doctrines to be elicited and defined ; and for the interpretation of Scripture, the learning, and deep and clear understanding of the Sacred writers, possessed by St. Jerome, if not directly engaged in teaching St. Ninian, must yet, without doubt, have had their influence on those to whom St. Damasus committed him for instruction. It was the time, too, when the spiritual understanding of Scripture was being brought out so much by St. Ambrose. And all the teaching he then obtained, whether from the lips of his instructors or the writings of the great teachers of the Church, was eagerly learnt and carefully stored up by St. Ninian for his present comfort, and to be brought out in future years for the instruction of others. In St. Aelred's words. "Applying himself with entire eagerness to the Word of God, he drew from the views of different teachers, as the laden bee from various flowers, the rich honey with which he filled the cells of wisdom, and stored them in the hive of his heart, to be kept there, to be meditated on, and afterwards brought out for the

refreshment and support of his inner man, and the consolation of many others."

It was indeed a worthy recompense, that he, who for the love of the truth had thought lightly of home, country, wealth, and pleasures, should, so to say, be led into the innermost shrine of truth, and admitted to the very treasures of wisdom and knowledge ; should receive for carnal, spiritual ; for earthly, heavenly ; for temporal, eternal goods. He was happy. For he had now found a home ; for what is a home but a place where we meet with abiding sympathy—where we feel we can repose on those who love us, and whom we love. He had left a home which was dear to him ; one which he might well and holily love ; but he had found another, where he had what his own home could not give, the knowledge of his Saviour. He had a new father in the holy Damasus, and guides and directors in his wise teachers, and doubtless many brethren, for not in vain would he pray, "Let such as fear Thee, and have known Thy testimonies, be turned unto me. And Rome was full of objects for a Christian to admire and love.

It so happens that, chiefly from St. Jerome's letters, we know much of the spiritual history of the Roman Church, and of what occurred there about this time, and as St. Ninian must have been influenced by what was going on, and our estimate of what he was must be to a greater degree formed by knowing the characters held in esteem at that day, some longer reference to them may be excused.

For the first two or three years of his stay St. Jerome was residing there, beloved and esteemed by the good for the holiness of his life, his humility, and learning. Intimately associated as he was with St.

Damasus, particularly in his theological studies, it is not unnatural to suppose that the young enquirer after truth had opportunities of drinking in the lessons of wisdom from his lips. For the Saint suffered, it is said, from sore eyes, and so was led to spend more time in oral teaching and conversation. One of his chief employments was to answer the enquiries of those who consulted him on the interpretation of Holy Scripture, and he was ever ready to afford the benefits of his instruction to those who sought it. There can be little doubt that St. Ninian would earnestly desire to hear him, or that opportunities would be given him.

Not long after his arrival another event occurred which must have been most interesting to him, and have made him feel as in the very metropolis of the Church. In the year 382, a council was held in Rome, at which Bishops were assembled, whose names have ever been honoured, and whom St. Ninian through life might remember. St. Ascholius, Bishop of Thessalonica, was here, the intimate friend of St. Athanasius, one who had laboured in the conversion of the Goths, a work like that to which the latter part of St. Ninian's own life was to be devoted. St. Epiphanius, too, the aged Bishop of Salamis, and Paulinus, of Antioch, had come with St. Jerome, and spent the winter of 382-3 in Rome, lodging in the house of the holy widow St. Paula. Epiphanius, now above seventy years of age, had lived through the troubled times of Arianism. He was the scholar and the dear friend of the sainted hermit, Hilarion, and his own life had for many years been spent in religious solitude, whence he had derived a severe and unbending character, and was now highly honoured in the Church. St. Ambrose was here, and lodged in the house of his

sister, St. Marcellina, to whom he was indebted for the blessings of a religious education, and for a bright example of sincere piety. She had thirty years before put on the religious habit, and devoted herself to a life of singular holiness in retirement, silence, and prayer,—the secret cause, it may be, in some degree of that glory which shone forth in her brother.

It was a time when many Roman ladies of high rank and wealth retired from the world, and devoted themselves in their own homes, and with their near relations, to the exercises of religion and works of charity. Each house was a little monastery, where prayer and praise, and fasting and watching, dwelt with love and abundant almsgiving, and works of mercy for the souls and bodies of others—widowed mothers, with their daughters, giving up the enjoyment of wealth and station, and withdrawing to be nearer God. Such was the natural way in which, before the systematic introduction of monastic rules, pious Christians adopted a mode of life which enabled them to serve God without distraction, in prayer and the practice of charity.

Such was St. Marcella, whom St. Jerome calls the glory of the Roman ladies. She had, after losing her husband, early endeavoured to imitate the ascetics of the East, of whom she had heard from St. Athanasius. She refused to marry again, and employed herself in works of devotion and charity. Her example was followed by many noble maidens, who placed themselves under her care, and many religious societies were formed in consequence.

One of the most distinguished of her spiritual children was St. Paula, whom she had comforted on the death of her husband, and induced to forsake the world. St. Paula was descended from one of the

noblest Roman families, and had given up great riches and a high place in society, to seek consolation in God. She had now adopted a life of retirement and poverty in the possession of wealth, enquiring out the poor and relieving them with her own hand. "She could make," she said, "no better provision for her children than by drawing on them by her alms, the blessings of heaven." Her time was chiefly spent in religious reading and prayer. She avoided the distractions of society, seeking only the edifying conversation of religious people. At her house, as was said, St. Epiphanius and Paulinus were lodged, and St. Jerome was her spiritual guide during his stay in Rome. There were many others, some of whom, in the society of their own families, formed religious retreats; others united together, under the guidance of a holy and experienced matron. It is most interesting to see the way in which these associations sprung up. The spontaneous growth, as it were, of a deep sense of the truths of religion, and of love to God and man. The example of the solitaries of Egypt had but to be set before them, and they whose hearts were prepared followed it. A few were influenced at first, and from them it spread to greater numbers. They were possessed with the desire of leading a heavenly life on earth, and embraced it under such forms as naturally suggested themselves. We call their houses monasteries, but they are so different from what we usually associate with the name that it is apt to mislead us. They were simple and natural associations of religious persons, living in ordinary dwellings, and devoting themselves to a strict life of silence, abstinence, and prayer, to labour and works of love; and they might rise up spontaneously in any

Church where there was the spirit which at first gave them birth.

The monasteries of Rome, as being religious communities formed in the very heart of the city, are highly commended by St. Augustine. 'The religious lived together, under the care of a virtuous and learned priest, maintaining themselves by their own labour, ordinarily having but one meal each day, and that towards night ; some fasting for longer periods, even for three or more days, but no one being forced to undergo austerities he could not bear.' It was most natural for St. Ninian to join some such body ; for he was separated from his country, without any ties in the world, or any home but what the Church offered, and so to unite himself to a body of like minded brethren, in a society of religious men, living together under some rule, was the obvious course by which to seek for support, sympathy, and improvement. Here he was free from the wretchedness and the sights of evil which a life in the city would bring. He might live in silent study, or laborious occupation, enjoying the blessing of undistracted attention to Divine things, without the chill of solitude, the presence of his brethren assisting him to realize that of those unseen Beings who are ever around us. The examples of holy men, seen in their daily round of employments, their humility, recollection, patience, industry, and self-denial, how great a privilege to one who was endeavouring himself to grow in grace, and to learn to copy what was good and profitable in others. And that he adopted this course, which was what the most religious people of his time would do, is confirmed by the circumstance, that St. Siricius, who chose him to be

a Bishop, particularly favoured the practice of selecting the Clergy from such monastic bodies.

Thus St. Ninian lived for the next fifteen years, fifteen years of what is called the best part of a man's life, gradually advancing in that holiness which was afterwards manifested in his works on earth, and his availing power with heaven; growing in gentleness, self-devotion, and recollection, and meanwhile making progress in the depth and accuracy of his views of Divine truth, and in the understanding of Holy Scripture. It was, according to men's present views, a long time to spend in comparative inactivity, where the missionary life was that for which he was destined. It was, as they say, shutting up in a cloister, power, and energy, and goodness, which might have been more usefully engaged in doing good to others. But very different from the hurried eagerness of men for immediate visible results, is the calm majestic march of the Divine dispensations, and the course of those of His servants in whom they are imitated. He waited four thousand years before He undertook His work. He would have his servants well matured in knowledge and love before they take in hand the offices they are designed for, and is willing that there should be a long and seemingly unprofitable toil, in preparing deep and strong foundations for the structure He would raise. One well prepared and sanctified character exercises far more influence for good, than many ordinary ones. Such an one is a true standard of what we should aim to be, and as such attracts the hearts of those who are prepared to receive the truth. He is fit to guide, and by his deep practical wisdom, and weight of character, has a constraining power over even unwilling minds. St. Ninian might have engaged early in

missionary labours, and have been as others are. He waited, growing more and more in holiness ; and he went forth to work miracles, and to convert the nations.

Nor should it surprise us, that so long a time should be spent in the study of Divine truth. Nearly as long a time given exclusively to that highest object of the human mind, was not of old thought too much for preparing one who was to teach others. It is our low standard of theological attainments, which makes a few months seem enough to prepare for expounding the mysteries of the Gospel ; and it is our diversion into matters only accidentally connected with Theology proper, which leads us to conceive the knowledge of the divine unnecessary, if not prejudicial to his practical usefulness in influencing the hearts of men. Criticism and Antiquities, Church History and Evidences, viewed externally, and by themselves, are thought, and rightly so, to be of little use to one who has the care of souls. But such is not the case with Theology, properly so called, that is the knowledge of what we are to believe, and what we are to do ; the more exact knowledge of Him, Whom truly to know is everlasting life ; the true vision of Whom keeps the soul and its affections in their right position, whilst errors and false views distort and deprave them ; this is real Theology. It is Dogmatic Theology which contemplates, defines, and gives exactness to our views of that truth by which we are sanctified ; Controversial Theology, which enables us to guard the truth from corruption, and to watch against the first inroads of error. Surely, to a holy mind such contemplations are alike the highest employment of the understanding, and tend most to his own sanctification, and his power of teaching others.

St. Thomas, the most profound of schoolmen, was the most devout of Saints, and the most powerful preacher. His prayers are among the choicest treasures of the Church. His sermons awakened and converted the most ignorant and hardened sinners.

And as regards Moral Theology, with its handmaids, Casuistical and Ascetic, contemplating what we ought to be, and to do, in principle and detail, and how we may attain to a saintly temper ; what time and thought can be too much for attaining to exactness of knowledge here, by one who is really to be a guide to others ? How many nice points are to be determined ! How many difficult questions in the treatment of the souls of men in their varied spiritual conditions ! What grave consideration of duties and principles ! It betokens indeed that men have fallen into a low religious condition, when they cannot even estimate the value of deep and long continued study on such subjects. If it be kept in mind that Theology, rightly so called, is the knowledge of God, and how we may please Him, it will be evident, that as the one great requisite for the study of it is a holy life, so it is the first business of the Clergy to attain proficiency in it, and that no extent of real attainment can be too much—they ought to draw all their care and study this way. This will be the guide of their course of study, and will arrange in due subordination the various other branches of knowledge, and enable them to derive from each what it can minister to their highest end. It will secure the knowledge of those truths which are essential, will determine the extent and the end for which we should pursue the rest. No subject of human knowledge will then be without its use and due position.

Of the course of study St. Ninian would go through,

we may form probably a very fair notion from a Treatise of St. Augustine, written not long after, designed to direct the studies of those who were to be teachers of others.

The main object to which he directed the student was the right understanding and explanation of the Holy Scriptures. This seems to be viewed as the chief business of the Christian teacher, and it is to this end that all other studies are made subordinate. But first, he was to know those principles to which all interpretations must be conformed—the principles of Christian Faith, Hope, and Charity. Of Faith, in the full knowledge and understanding of the Creed ; of Hope, and of the sum of evangelical morality in the love of God above all things, and of our brethren in Him, and for His sake ; and any interpretation which is inconsistent with these principles, whether as sanctioning immorality, or erroneous doctrine, must be wrong. Next, presupposing that the student has, by personal religion, entered on the steps of wisdom, beginning with the fear of the Lord, he is to learn the rules and principles of literal and spiritual interpretation, the latter being the chief study of the expositor. In connexion with this, he is to acquire a knowledge of Scripture criticism, of the right text, and translation ; of history, natural science, logic, and all other subjects which may be useful to him as subsidiary learning. Lastly, he is to study how to express to others what he himself has learnt, by acquiring the art of Christian eloquence. The first and second of these subjects we may conceive would form the principal part of St. Ninian's studies, the doctrines of the faith and Christian love, and the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, for both of which he would find so

great assistance in the works of contemporary writers, or of those who had gone before ; as well as by the oral teaching of the doctors, of the Roman Church.

So much of apology, if it be needed, for St. Ninian's living for fifteen years, in what the world would call a comparatively narrow sphere at Rome, but really, in a life of labour, thought, and constant endeavour after improvement.

Every thing here combined for his advancement in fitness for his great destiny. Rome was the centre of the Christian world. Errors and disputes were heard of, examined, and determined there ; each improvement in the rules of holy living, each practical advancement in Church discipline and conduct, was brought into this great resort and emporium of the Christian world, while the steady orthodoxy of the Church enabled it to look with discrimination on the opinions and practices which rose up around it.

The details of St. Ninian's life here are quite unknown, but general history relates many events, which must have exercised an important influence upon him.

Within three or four years after his arrival, St. Ninian sustained a heavy loss in the death of his kind patron, St. Damasus, who died the tenth of December, in the year 384 ; being then nearly eighty years of age. He was succeeded by St. Siricius, who, twelve years after, was to consecrate and send out St. Ninian. For some time he was unacquainted with him, as was natural in so large a Church, and when St. Ninian did not occupy a prominent place. St. Ninian, therefore, deprived of the friendship and countenance of St. Damasus, was left to go on in the ordinary course.

About this time he was, most probably, admitted to the minor orders as a Reader. For we have the

rules which St. Siricius sent to the Church of Spain, immediately on his election, February, 385, in which he determines the regular gradation of offices. One who from infancy was devoted to the service of the Church, was to be baptized before he was fourteen, and placed in the rank of Readers. If his life was approved till he was thirty, he was made an Acolyte and Sub-deacon, and if judged worthy, a Deacon, after having previously made a promise of continence. Then, after five years' service, he might be admitted to the Priesthood, and, after ten more, to the Episcopate. Such was the long probation and service for the sacred ministry in those days. And though, very probably, in St. Ninian's case, as in others, peculiar circumstances might be a ground for departing from it in some points, we may suppose it observed on the whole : and that he went through the regular course of clerical offices in Rome.

Meanwhile important events were occurring around him ; events in which the whole Church has since been interested. The conversion of St. Augustine and his baptism at Milan, occurred at Easter, 387 ; and the latter part of that year, after the death of his mother, and whole of the following one, he spent at Rome. It is not unnatural to suppose that he and St. Ninian might meet ; the more humble talents of the Briton, being in the eyes of St. Augustine far more than compensated by that spotless purity of heart which enjoyed the blessedness of seeing God. The one baptized in infancy had by habitual obedience, kept his robes unstained. The other, washed from a load of actual sins, was now at the eleventh hour labouring more than any, and by his zeal and earnestness making way beyond them.

About this time, too, the Emperor Theodosius visited Italy, and great exertions were in vain used to prevail on him to favour the depressed cause of paganism ; it was his resolution which led to the entire fall of the ancient superstition. His visit to Rome in 389, gave the last blow to idolatry. He entered the city with Valentinian, and then it was that the most distinguished families embraced Christianity, the Anicii, Probi, Pauli, Gracchi. The people ran in crowds to the Vatican, to venerate the tombs of the Apostles, or to the Lateran to be baptized ; but few adhered to the ancient superstitions. The temples were filled with cobwebs and soon fell to ruin ; and the idols were left alone under their roofs with the owls and the bats.

The time was now approaching when he was to be called to that work for which the providence of God had long been training him. Year after year had passed, and, to himself, it might seem as if he was doing but little service, and was an unprofitable servant : but a preparation was going on in the practice of humble obedience, and in His own good time God called on him to take his great work in hand. The duties of the offices he had been placed in, afforded an opportunity for his good qualities to be seen and generally recognized. Purity, wisdom, and circumspectness, are the points specially mentioned ; and those of them which may be considered as intellectual gifts, are just of the kind which would be formed and developed by religious principles ; the absence of hurry and excitement, calm considerateness, a fair estimate of others, are the natural fruits of that confidence in God which trusts that all will be controlled for good, which sets their true value on the things of the world and the

events of time, and so is without anxiety ; of charity, which despises no one, but sympathizes with their difficulties, puts itself in the place of others, and enters into their views ; and of honesty and simplicity of aim, which has no bye ends to entangle, or duplicity to involve it. It is from these qualities that wisdom in counsel springs. And to be gradually entrusted with offices of responsibility, in subordination to higher authority ; the learning practically to rule and to be ruled, in the successive steps of the lower clerical offices, was the very means to form the mind of the future saint to this prudence in judging and circumspection in acting. And his excellencies by degrees became generally matter of remark, and brought him under the notice and, ultimately, into esteem and familiar association with St. Siricius.

“ While he was spoken of by all as chaste in body, wise in understanding, provident in counsel, circumspect in every word and deed, he rose to the favour and friendship of the Pope himself.”

The advantages to be derived from this position were, we need not say, very great, in fitting him for the work in which he was to engage ; and the knowledge of it gives us peculiar means of ascertaining the views which St. Ninian entertained on many important subjects, and which he brought into our own country. For we know those of St. Siricius, and considering that after this intimate acquaintance with him the Pope fixed on him as the fittest person to correct the errors which prevailed among the British Christians, we cannot doubt that Ninian's views coincided with his own ; the more so as his professed intention was to teach in Britain the doctrines of the Roman Church.

The decretals of St. Siricius sent to the Church of Spain in 385, have already been referred to; they recognize, it need scarcely be said, a monastic system, as an established custom, approved and encouraged by the Church. A strict penitential discipline and the celibacy of the Clergy are presupposed as right, regulated and enforced. A formal expression of the same views was elicited by the heresy of Jovinian, who, amongst other errors, maintained "that virgins have no more merit than widows or married women, and, that there is no difference between abstaining from meats, and using them with thanksgiving." With these easy doctrines it is no wonder he had many followers at Rome; persons who had long lived in continence and mortification, married and returned to a soft and unrestrained life. It did not, however, number any Bishop among those who embraced it, and in the year 390 an assembly of the Roman Clergy was held, and the doctrines declared to be contrary to the Christian truth; and by the unanimous advice of the Priests and Deacons who were present, and we can scarcely doubt St. Ninian was among them, Jovinian and his followers were excommunicated.

CHAPTER VI.

St. Ninian's return to Britain.

AND now we may pass to the time when the Saint was called to the high duties of a Bishop and a Missionary. The activity and vigilance of St. Siricius prompted him to act upon those feelings of sympathizing interest which give to every Church which is a healthy member of the great Catholic body, a deep concern is the welfare of every other part. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Still more should he feel it who occupied the chief See of Christendom ; on whom, in an especial manner, it seemed incumbent to watch and provide for all, to support the weak, to correct the erring, and to convert the unbelieving ; and Siricius seems particularly to have felt this interest in our remote and despised country. It was compassion for half taught and misguided Christians, for heathens and barbarians, for whom the Son of God had shed His precious blood—for immortal beings, who, unrescued, might perish for ever, but by the power of the Gospel, would be exalted to everlasting bliss, and swell the ranks of the Angelic choirs. It was compassion, such as two centuries afterwards moved his successor, the saintly Gregory, to yearn over the wretchedness of our Saxon ancestors. These feelings in their case would go beyond the ordinary compassion which Christians generally would have ; they would feel with the blessed Apostle that they had the care of all the Churches, and that the weak and the scandalized were the special objects of their sympathy.

And in the case of St. Siricius there was happily one at hand peculiarly suited for the work before him. St. Ninian had waited long for this call to the office for which Divine Providence had all along designed, and been preparing him. Perhaps he would have no thought of undertaking so great a work, or if ever a desire had crossed his mind to impart to his countrymen the unspeakable blessings he had himself obtained, it might be repressed as not to be thought of, till some guiding of Providence, or obedience to authority should determine it to be his duty, and sanction his undertaking it. For it is not to be imagined that Ninian had forgotten Britain. How should he? Means of communication were regular and speedy; events of moment were frequently occurring; his countrymen, who, as we have heard, made religious visits to the Holy Land, would often draw to the city, to offer their devotions at the tombs of the Apostles; others would resort among the provincials for the advantages of the schools; others again, like himself, for religious improvement. Of one such we know, St. Piran, the Cornish Saint, whose Church in the Sand was recently brought to light. He was a native of Ireland, and born about 352. When about thirty years of age, and so nearly at the same time as St. Ninian, having received some imperfect information about the Christian Faith, he travelled to Rome for more complete instruction. He is supposed by the Irish writers to have been consecrated at Rome, and returned home, accompanied by four Clerics, who were all afterwards Bishops. With them St. Ninian would hold converse, and hear the language, which, harsh as it may seem to us, would sound sweet in his ears, as the language of his home. By these means his information and in-

terest in Britain would be kept alive. And when the holy Father, whose authority and wish would be a command, called him to this work, we may imagine that with his deep humility, and shrinking from an office, to which he would seem quite unequal, there would be some warm feeling kindled, in the hope that he might be a blessing to those he loved so well.

In St. Aelred's words, "The Roman Pontiff had heard that there were in the western part of Britain some who had not yet embraced the faith of our Saviour,¹ some also who had heard the word of the Gospel, but from heretical or ignorant teachers ; and by the impulse of the Divine Spirit, he, with his own hands consecrated this man of God to the office of a Bishop, and sent him with the Apostolic Benediction to this people."

This event most probably occurred in the spring of the year 397. The date is determined by a circumstance which is on other accounts interesting, and intimately connected with the history and future character of St. Ninian. It is, that on his way to Britain,

¹ It is most probable that attention was drawn to the condition of the British of this district, by the publication of St. Jerome's work against Jovinian, which occurred in the year 393 or 394. It was written at the request of some Christians at Rome, and excited great interest there. In the second book he mentions, that he had himself, when a youth in Gaul, seen some of the Attacotti, a British tribe, who ate human flesh ; and adds still more revolting details as to the habits of their people. This tribe occupied the country between Loch Lomond and Loch Fine. Such a statement could not fail to excite enquiry, and lead the Pope to ascertain the real state of the unconverted people, who, being of the same race, were within the limits of the empire. The mission of St. Ninian was the natural result.

he visited St. Martin of Tours, whose name had recently been made known through the whole Church, by Sulpicius's life of him. Now St. Martin, according to the best authorities, died in November, 397. The life in question was a narrative, written by Sulpicius, for his friend St. Paulinus of Nola, without any view to its becoming public. It was however communicated by Paulinus to others, and so spread with unprecedented rapidity. This occurred within a year before the death of the Saint, for it was after the death of St. Clare in the previous November. And the sensation it produced in Rome, and throughout the Christian world, was incredible. The booksellers having at command only the slow process of the human hand, could not have it copied so fast as to meet the demand, and could sell it at almost any price ; it was considered the most gainful work they had ever had. No book was so much read, or so eagerly sought after ; it was in every one's hands, and every where the subject of conversation. For it related of a living Bishop so near them as in France, sanctity almost unequalled ; and miraculous powers, such as were not then possessed by any one ; and these recorded in graceful language, with the Latinity of the purest ages, and the unaffected simplicity of a friend writing to a friend of what he had himself seen and known ; and with the deep and affectionate reverence of a disciple, for one who had guided him by example and instruction into the ways of holiness and peace.

From this work, St. Ninian, as St. Aelred relates, ardently desired to see and converse with the holy man whose ways were depicted there, and accordingly, on his way to Britain, diverged to Tours to visit its Bishop.

We too have the beautiful picture which Sulpicius has drawn, and for St. Ninian's sake, that we may know the sort of person whom he looked on as a model ; and for our own, that we may in this way see the Saint ourselves, we will go along with him to the Hermit Bishop, whom our northern Churches venerate so highly.

St. Martin had long lived as a recluse, and when the people of Tours would have him, in spite of his poor clothes and mean appearance, to be their Bishop, he kept up his holy solitude as much as he could, in a cell adjoining his Church. This however proved more liable to interruption than he wished, so he went into a lonely spot a mile or two from the town, where a sweep of the river left a level grassy plain, which was shut out from the country on its landward side by a line of precipitous rocks, and accessible only by difficult paths. Here he fixed his abode, and to him gathered others who desired to be under his guidance, and forsaking the world, to imitate his humble and mortified life. They were about sixty in number ; some lived in cells built by themselves, many in caves in the rocks ; and that in solitude, except when they met for prayers, or at their meals, and labouring, many by copying books, for their own support. Above all, the Saint himself drew the hearts of holy men to him by his humility, meekness, and deep knowledge of religious truth. He was quite an illiterate man, yet readily solved the difficulties of Scripture. But his real life was hid with Christ, and he was in continual communion with Him, unceasingly praying, either by direct supplication, or the inward lifting up of his soul to God. His humility was remarkable ; he judged no one, he condemned no one ; he was never irritated, never depressed by sorrow, or excited by mirth,

but ever bearing in his looks a kind of heavenly joyfulness. Christ only was on his lips, and in his heart compassion, piety, and peace. Besides all this, there was an awfulness thrown around him by the visible tokens of the Divine presence, in the miracles he had wrought ; miracles which have a degree of evidence rarely to be met with.

To visit this saint, then, so marked by traits of personal holiness, and the awful manifestations of Divine authority accompanying his deeds ; was the object of St. Ninian on his way to Britain. "He diverged to Tours, says St. Aelred, filled with the Holy Ghost, and touched by an eager desire of seeing him."

Meanwhile St. Martin, had been prepared for his coming. "By the grace of prophetic illumination, the virtues of the new Bishop were not unknown to him. He was taught that he was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and would be the instrument of the salvation of many ; and, in consequence, with what joy, devotion, and affection, did he receive him." Their time was spent in holy converse and aspirations of divine love ; Ninian, doubtless, being eager to learn from so great a saint, and profiting by his readiness to solve the difficulties of Scripture, and to speak of Christ, and the rules of holy living. He also gained another advantage. His wish was to introduce religion into his country in its completeness, to present it before his people, not only in the statement of doctrines and rules of practice, but as visibly embodied in the Church, and manifested in her sacred services ; it was his intention to imitate, "as the faith, so the customs of the Roman Church in building Churches and arranging the services ;" and he requested St. Martin to furnish him with masons for the work. "In the tabernacle of the Lord

two columns are joined together, and two cherubim stretching out their wings touch each other ; now borne up on the wings of virtue they withdraw to be with God ; now standing and letting them fall they condescend to their neighbours. So these saints returned from heavenly objects to the things of this world." At last they parted. " They had feasted on their mutual conversations as on heavenly banquets, and separated with embraces, kisses, and tears shed in common. St. Martin remained in his See. Ninian hastened to the work for which he had been sent forth by the Holy Ghost."

Such is the sympathy of holy men ; such their love, seeming not to need the usual preparations of human friendship ; but as they each have advanced towards the one model, the image of Christ, enabling them to understand each other at once.

On his way through France and Belgium, as Camearius reports, St. Ninian was anxious to labour for the conversion of the people, and great numbers were the fruit of his preaching. The authority however is very recent, and though he may be regarded, like other later writers, as preserving and perpetuating a tradition of a much earlier date, the evidence is so slight, that we must leave the matter simply to recommend itself by its internal probability.

And now, after an absence of many years, St. Ninian is again in sight of the shores of Britain, and gazes on its white cliffs as he nears his native land. But greatly is he changed. He had gone forth, young, uninformed, seeking to be taught the truth. He returns in mature age, with solid judgment, deep knowledge, confirmed faith, commissioned to instruct others, and to impart to them those true views of doctrine, and those

many lessons of holy living which he had been storing up. But with how great a responsibility did he come, and with how little earthly help. In Rome he had been surrounded by those who sympathized with him, and were engaged in the sacred pursuits he had been devoted to ; counsel, consolation, and aid were ever at hand. Now was he to stand alone, with a half barbarous people around him, whom he had to labour to convert, or to correct, scarcely knowing how they would receive him, or how he should find access to their minds.

On the part of his countrymen however the greatest interest was felt in him. We know how strongly the inhabitants of remote districts are interested in those who have left the seclusion in which they live, to make their way in the world. There is among such people a strong feeling of community, which makes each one a relation as it were to all the rest ; and if one goes out from his native village to make his way in a larger sphere, deep interest is felt in his success, and a desire to hear of him. The old remember him as a child, and his father and father's father. The young were the companions of his boyish days. If he becomes distinguished and honoured, all seem to have a share in it. And Ninian had been a youth whose goodness and engaging manners would especially gain their affections. He was a Briton, the son too of one of their own princes, to whom it was natural they should cling with peculiar attachment as associated with the remembrance of what their tribes had been ; for amid the improvements of Roman civilization, many ardent spirits would look back on the wild glories of their uncivilized days, and cherish the recollection of the renown and independence of their race. We may imagine

the interest with which they would hear of the esteem in which their young countryman was held, the position which he occupied even in the chief city of the world ; and the joy with which they would receive the news, that he was to be restored to them as their Bishop. He was the son of their king, but he had humbled himself by relinquishing secular dignity, and now was exalted by a far higher spiritual office. The children of this world, the more they valued its gifts of wealth and power, the more they would conceive that he had made a sacrifice ; and they who had the opportunity of seeing any thing of the peace and joy he had in Christ, would see that he had not been wrong in making it. Here was a living instance of giving up the world for Christ. What it was to be a Prince they saw, and they would think much of it. The Bishop might have had these goods of wealth and honour, but he preferred to be a servant of Christ, and of the people of Christ, to struggle with poverty, to submit to hardships, to overcome ill-will, unkindness, and obstinacy, by meek endurance. The sacrifice they could appreciate ; and when they heard him speak of leaving all to follow Christ, and of taking up the cross, his words would come home to them, for what he said was real ; it had an interpretation in his own doings.

This will in a measure account for the great success which attended the first opening of his work amongst them. It is described as an outbreak of enthusiasm, which ran through the people, and enabled him at once to do the work of years.

If he preached at all as did the great models of his day, we cannot wonder at it. They preached as men who realized what is unseen, for the great truths of eternity were the groundwork of all they said ; and they

came forth from deep and earnest meditation on these truths, to speak of them to others, with earnestness and affection, their own minds being filled with the ideas and affections which corresponded to them. As one who had really seen some land of bliss, or awful suffering, or impending danger, they spoke of them in a natural and real way, and by their very sincerity, and the vivid impression of their own conviction of all they said, they carried others along with them. They could trust to the spontaneous flow of their minds, for they had been schooled by severe lives and serious thought, to deep awe and reverence, and been trained in the full and exact knowledge of Christian truth ; and as Bishops almost exclusively were preachers, they had long time for thought, experience, and sobriety, before they undertook so high an office. They could speak freely, for they spoke of what they really knew by personal experience, and long acquaintance with the ways of holy living ; and this without erroneous and vague statements, or the risk of irreverence, familiarity, or excitement.

It was the age of Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine ; and Ninian came into Britain, as it were, from their school, with all the fulness of view and varied thoughts which an acquaintance with Christians and Christian Theology, in its highest form, would give. And this was expressed to the Britons in their own language ; that language which, unlike most of the other subjects of the empire, they still retained and cherished, and which would be more likely to be preserved and usually spoken in remote and mountainous districts, as Cumbria and Galloway. And we know how it gladdens the hearts of the Celts of these days, in Wales and Ireland, to hear their own language, and

how they think no harm can come in it ; and can imagine what the Britons would feel at hearing it from St. Ninian.

It may be they were of the same imaginative and susceptible temper which we find in those remains of their race, for the effect of the Saint's preaching was immediate and very great. "Crowds of people collected together and came to meet him ; there was unbounded delight among them all, and wonderful devotion. Every where did the praises of Christ resound, for they all held him as a prophet. At once, the active labourer, entering his master's field, began to pull up what was ill-planted ; what was ill brought together, to disperse ; to pull down what was built amiss." This was his first beginning. "Afterwards, having cleared the minds of the faithful from all their errors, he began to lay in them the foundation of the holy faith ; to build the gold of wisdom, the silver of knowledge, and the stones of good works. These all he taught by word, exhibited by example, and confirmed by numerous miracles."

CHAPTER VII.

St. Ninian in Galloway.

THE province which was assigned to St. Ninian seems to have been the western portion of our northern counties, and the Scottish Lowlands, south of the Wall of Antoninus. In the direction of the heathen, it was, of course, unlimited ; the field was open for him to convert all he could. In Scotland there were, pro-

bably, very few Christians ; in the English portion they were but partially converted and very ignorant. What arrangement was made between the new Bishop and the Bishop of York, or of any unknown See, in whose diocese this country was lying before, we cannot tell. The British Bishops might gladly receive amongst them a missionary Bishop, as they afterwards did St. Germanus, to assist in eradicating evil and promoting the good of their people ; or there may have been some definite district assigned to him ; and of this it may be that a trace remained in the limits of St. Kentigern's diocese of Glasgow, which seems to have taken the place of St. Ninian's, and extended to the Cross on Stainmoor.

This district was occupied by different tribes of Britons, having the same language and character, except that those in England were more influenced by Roman civilization. Those to the north consisted of five tribes, whose country had been formed into a new province, by Theodosius, A. D. 367, under the name of Valentia. They lay between the two walls, and were in an intermediate state of civilization, between the inhabitants of the ancient provinces, who had for centuries been under Roman influence, and the wild unsubdued inhabitants of the Highlands. Their country was but partially occupied by the Romans, who used it chiefly for military occupation and defence against the Caledonians ; and though the inhabitants were Roman citizens, those who lived in the more remote portions of the district probably differed little from the barbarous state in which Cæsar had found our whole island.

It was among the English portion of his people that St. Ninian first laboured. His history implies that, as was natural, he first went among his own people and

the friends of his early years, to impart to them the inestimable benefits he was commissioned to diffuse ; and in accordance with this, Leland distinctly speaks of his first mission as being to the coast of Cumberland, between St. Bees Head and Carlisle.

The circumstances of the country were not, however, such as were in any way suited for his long continuance or permanent establishment there. Cumberland lying just within the southern wall and being filled by military establishments,¹ was now the scene of war-like preparation, and the fearful anticipations, and miserable realities of a bloody and exterminating warfare. It was a time of bitter distress to the Provincial Britons ; and sad, indeed, was the sight presented to St. Ninian. The peace and tranquillity he had left in his native land was at an end. It was just the time at which the wild hordes of Picts, who had been restrained whilst the vigorous hand of Theodosius held the reins of empire, were again, a year or two after his death, coming like a flood over the fair fields and rich and civilized abodes of the Provincials. In the following year, 398, it was necessary to send two additional legions into Britain to save the province from utter ruin ; and it was now but thirteen years before it was finally abandoned by the Romans.

St. Gildas has depicted in strong colours the savage invaders, and the wretchedness of the helpless Provincials. It needs, however, no exaggeration to represent the greatness of their sufferings. They had long been shielded by the power of the empire. Four legions evidence alike the danger from the barba-

¹ There were stations at Moresby, Ellenborough, Burgh by the Sands, besides Carlisle and Penrith, and those at Stanwix, Bowness, and along the line of the wall.

rians and the security of the inhabitants. They had, from the first, been taught to forget their warlike habits in the luxuries of ease, and to delight in a slavery which presented itself in the form of comfort and refinement. The works of long continued peace—the improvements of civilization—the beauty of their cities—their costly and elegant houses, now fell before the destroyers, whose cupidity they had excited. Hardy and warlike Picts poured from the fastnesses of the Highlands ; poor, uncivilized, unclothed, what the Britons themselves had been 300 years before. Their ill-will was increased by the very circumstance that their countrymen had identified themselves with the invaders, whose yoke they had themselves with difficulty avoided. Rapine, bloodshed, and cruelty followed in their course, and the Provincials, unable to cope with them, were driven from their peaceful homes, and witnessed the destruction of their cherished possessions, and the death of their dearest friends. Such were the miseries which met St. Ninian on returning to the home of his childhood, and led to his retiring to a more peaceful district to establish his Church. It is not improbable that he was accompanied by some of his family, who might seek a refuge on the retired shore of Galloway, from the rapine and harassing inroads to which their old homes were exposed. We find, at least, that his brother was his companion in after years, and, as one ancient Life reports, his mother and relations were settled near him. His father may have died before he saw, on earth, the face of his son, or witnessed the blessings which he brought to his countrymen. He was removed from the joy of seeing the fruits of Ninian's preaching ; from the distress of beholding the calamities of his country.

The plan which St. Ninian proposed to adopt for carrying on the work of a missionary Bishop, required a place where he might erect a Church, where he might himself permanently live, and form a religious society. For this it was most important to select a position which would be retired, and secure alike from the interruptions of a rude soldiery or the outrage of barbarian tribes. And the place which he chose was singularly adapted for his purpose.

The country between the walls was the very ground on which the battles of the contending armies would continually be fought ; like the suburbs of a besieged town, which neither party spared, but made the arena of their mutual combats. To the south-west, however, the extensive promontory of Galloway stretched beyond the scene of war, and being guarded by the sea on either side, had on the whole remained almost undisturbed by the changes which had gone on around it. It was removed from the ordinary course of the invading Highlanders, and had not itself any objects to attract their rapacity. It had scarcely been affected even by the Roman power. Agricola, in the year 83, had contemplated an expedition to Ireland, and with this view, had overrun the country ; roads had been made, and encampments formed, but, afterwards, as he seems not to have had any object in pursuing the natives into their fastnesses, its remote situation made it little frequented by the Romans. It appears to have continued without giving much occasion for military establishments, for few Roman remains are found in it.

What is now a bare and uninteresting district, where the slow progress of plantations endeavours to compensate for the want of natural wood, was then covered by thick forests, and occupied by Britons,

living in all their uncivilized simplicity. The tribe was called the Novantes ; and Ptolemy mentions their two towns as Rerigonium and Leucopibia. The latter was the one which St. Ninian fixed on as the site for his Church. It was conforming, so far as he could, to the ancient rule, to fix the seat of a Bishop in a city, that the shepherd may be where his flock principally are found ; and in this place the greatest number of Christians would be gathered. Of its identity with Whithern there can be no doubt, and the very probable and generally received conjecture is, that the Leucopibia of our present copies of Ptolemy should be Leucoikidia—Whitehouses ; so identifying its three names, Leucoikidia, Candida Casa, and Whithern, which is derived from the Saxon *ærn*, house. Baxter suggests that it is so called from the practice of the Celts (he says Picts, but there were no Picts in Galloway till long after this time) to white-wash their houses. It seems most probable that the name was prior to St. Ninian's arrival, and not derived, as commonly said, from the Church he built ; for whatever be made of the latter part of the word, *Leuco* speaks for itself, and *Casa* like *ærn*, seems rather to indicate an ordinary dwelling than a Church. There had been a *castra stativa* close adjoining the town which is the only Roman position traceable in Galloway ; and a road which Agricola had formed along the coast, had been continued to Leucopibia. But in their present pressing circumstances, the encampment doubtless would be abandoned. The town itself lies but two or three miles from the extremity of the promontory, which branches off from the main one of Galloway, and running far into the sea, forms almost the most southern point of Scotland. It is thus

without access by land except on the north ; and being naturally difficult of access, and out of the direct line towards Ireland, is now one of the most retired places in Scotland. Few had any inducement to visit it from the north ; and its southern and western sides are guarded by lofty and precipitous rocks, and only here and there afford access for vessels.

Here, then, St. Ninian might securely fix his See, removed from the troubles and dangers which occupied the rest of Britain ; and hence go forth to traverse the wild woodlands for the purpose of evangelizing the people. At the same time, the town was probably, as we may judge from the encampment and the road, one of the most important which the natives had. While, the promontory, called Burrow Head, which rises near it, is seen from and commands a view of the extensive diocese in which his lot was cast.

One looks with interest at the position of the Minsters of York or Lincoln, which are conspicuous through the whole surrounding districts—ever present remembrances of Divine Truth, and marks of him who sits there the spiritual father of the flock. Such was the position of St. Ninian's See. As you stand on the fine headland, with sea on every side, you almost look down on the mountains of the Isle of Man, which rise out of the sea, before you. To the right stretch the successive promontories of Galloway almost to Port Patrick ; the hills of Wigtonshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, and Dumfriesshire, rise in successive and lofty ridges, from the shores of the Solway, to the north ; while, due east, you may trace the coast of Cumberland, to St. Bees Head, or even to Blackcomb, backed by its fair blue hills, so picturesque in outline ; and as the light and shade alternate on the view, you may make

out each bay and headland, and even the white houses by the shore. Surely this was a place where the Saint might stand and survey the field in which he had to work. He had given evidence enough that he was no idle dreamer or slave of weak affection. Still we may well suppose that when he looked down from this central point, and had before him headlands and mountain tops which marked out the wide district committed to him, he would regard with especial tenderness, the distinctly marked shore where he had been baptized and spent his youthful years ;—those hills which he had looked up to from his home. They would recall the remembrance of those who were gone, and awake more fervent prayers for his country, now in the scene of distraction and warfare.

We have said that the manners of the people had been but little affected by the influence of the Romans. It is probable that their way of life was very much what that of the Britons had been before they were refined by Roman colonization, or as those of their neighbours the Mœatœ, who at the beginning of the third century inhabited barren mountains and marshy plains, had no manured or cultivated lands, but fed on the milk and flesh of their flocks, or what they got by hunting, or some wild fruits ; fish they never ate, though they had great plenty of them, and when in the woods they fed on roots and herbs.

There still remain in Galloway, circles, and Cromlechs, and Cistvaens, traces of what St. Ninian might see lingering as a broken, but still living system. The Druid religion was proscribed by the Romans. It was a strong, too strong a bond to be allowed to remain among the Britons ; but the superstition was still deeply rooted in the minds of the people, and a reve-

rence long after hung around the enclosures which had been consecrated by Druid rites. At present therefore they must have been in a wretched religious condition ; the public exercise and ministers of their own religion, were proscribed, and the truth had made little progress amongst them. There were indeed Christians, but in an ignorant and ill-informed state ; and to revive religion amongst these persons, and to correct their errors, was one great part of his work.

St. Ninian's plan was not merely to disperse Clergy in separate districts through the country, but to concentrate his strength in one point, and there to have a Church in some degree worthy of the design for which it was intended. The Churches of the Britons were generally of wood. In the cities no doubt, when the Romans had introduced their arts, and wealth abounded, the Churches, like the other public buildings, would be of stone ; but in remote and poorer places where wood was plentiful, it was more natural to make them of that material. It was ready to their hands ; stone they did not need, and could not afford, and might not have the art of working ; as St. Ninian had contemplated in taking his masons from Tours. Bede speaks of the Church as built of stone in a way unusual among the Britons. His words probably apply to the form as well as the material of the building, as he afterwards contrasts the Churches of the Picts with the Roman fashion. These Pictish Churches, and those of the Britons of Bede's days, and of the Irish, were of wood ; such they now are in Norway, where neither skill nor labour are spared in the beauty of the workmanship with which they are adorned.

St. Ninian however desired to use materials for his Church, which, by their strength and permanence,

might image forth the perpetuity of that Kingdom to which it belonged ; and in which the services might be performed with becoming dignity. He had Rome in his mind ; and as he had there doubtless planned what he would raise on the wooded shores of Britain, he might often now in thought return to the majesty and splendour of the Ritual and Churches of the Apostolic See ; so that whatever simplicity and poverty there might of necessity be elsewhere, the Cathedral at least would afford a model of what was aimed at, and which might be copied in their measure by the other Churches. Such doubtless was the practice, that the Mother Church of the diocese should be the place in which the due order of Divine Service might be kept as a guide to the rest.

Natural piety would move St. Ninian to this work, as indeed it had all along been near his heart. But it must also have been very important in its effects on the people, as a perpetual witness to the truths he taught. That we should give of our best to God, and that what is spent on places specially dedicated to His service is in some more immediate way given to Him, is a natural sentiment. This sentiment is implanted in the human heart, in common with those others which seem to have produced every where, among people who had any sense of religion, an external form and expression of it. Places appropriated for sacred services, where God was believed to be especially present ; an order of men set apart to serve Him, offerings of our best and costliest possessions, and grace and beauty in the ornaments of His House, and the conduct of its services,—these are the spontaneous dictates of the heart, and carry with them the evidence of their being a part of natural religion, as well as what we

commonly call such. Surely it is with this view that we should look on the fair forms of ancient art, their temples, their graceful processions, their choric poetry, as the offering of natural piety to the Supreme Being. Corrupted and polluted it is true they were, but so were the fundamental doctrines of essential religion ; and as we are used there to sever the over-laying errors from the elementary truths, and think it no prejudice to the Divine original of the true portions, that corruption should have attached to them, so let us regard the ceremonies of the heathen, and the taste and wealth they lavished on them, as the yearnings of the human soul after Him, to Whom it desires to do all homage.

And the consideration was very important in reference to the conversion of the heathen, as well as to the maintenance of religion among Christians ; for instead of falling in with their true and right notions as to what a religious system ought to be, we may by a neglect of external Religion directly clash with what they conceive we ought to do, which they will the more deeply believe, the more they are prepared by natural piety for embracing the Gospel. Instead of Churches, by their very forms and ornaments, and services, being silent and ever present preachers of the truth, embodying practical devotion, as being its fruits, they may give the lie to our professions, and hinder the reception of religion. We have power, we have generally wealth. Ninian had not much of either, yet he made no delay, but made it his first work to build the house of God on a scale which excited the admiration of the people, and suited the high purposes for which it was set apart.

It was during the time the Church was building, that

is, in November 397, that St. Ninian was divinely warned of the death of St. Martin, and so deep was the veneration he entertained for that holy man, that he dedicated the Church under his name ; a name it afterwards retained, though when the Saint by whom it was built, and whose remains were laid there became more known, it was commonly called St. Ninian's, and is spoken of as dedicated to him.

In Rome they built the Churches over the tombs of the Martyrs, and so dedicated them to their memory, and in other places it was usual to deposit some of the remains of a martyr under the altar of the Church, which was to be consecrated, a practice observed by the great Saints of the age. At Whithern however there was no martyr, and St. Ninian had not brought any relics, so it seemed as it were providential that St. Martin, one of the greatest Saints of the age, though not a martyr, should yet be honoured thus, and he to whom St. Ninian owed so much be regarded as the patron of his Church, and the model to be perpetually kept in view by his people.

I pass by the story which the present tradition of the country reports, that St. Ninian first settled in the Isle of Whithern, three or four miles from the present Church and town, and afterwards removed to that which was his ultimate position. It seems incompatible with the history, which speaks but of one place, and that the one where he at first engaged in building his Church ; for it was in progress at the time St. Martin died, that is within a year after his arrival in Britain. There is an old dismantled Chapel, as it were a land-mark, on the top of one of the hills in the Isle, which the people connect with St. Ninian, and consider the oldest Church in the kingdom, as if it

were his Church. It is however much more recent than even the ruined Church of Whithern ; it is a plain oblong Chapel, with very thick walls, and one narrow pointed window in each of the sides, with niches, and the other recesses usual about the east end : a lone deserted place without roof, which from its thick walls and simple form, suggests the notion of great antiquity ; but certainly is not connected with St. Ninian.

At Whithern then he gave a visibility and local habitation to the Church. The service of God would here be daily celebrated with the simple dignity which befits the image of heavenly things, and the unseen presence of Saints and Angels. The rites which the Roman Church had derived from her founders, or introduced in after times, as the spontaneous expression of the spiritual mind, the language, if we may say it, the very bearing, and graceful movements of the Spouse of Christ, would there be embodied, and form after the like model the minds of those who came to worship, or abode continually in her courts. With the building there was a society of religious persons formed, living with their Bishop, consisting of Clergy to maintain the unceasing services of the Church, to prepare for the higher offices, or to teach the people, and of laymen, who sought here to lead a devout life under the shadow, and within the very walls of the sanctuary.

That St. Ninian should form such a society was antecedently probable. The monastic life had been introduced and sanctioned in the western Church by the most revered men ; and the association of Bishops with their Clergy or other religious people, had been recently adopted by those whose judgment St. Ninian would be most guided by. St. Siricius, it has been

said, preferred to choose Clergy from monks ; what then was more natural than that the Bishop should himself form, and rule such a society ? He had himself to probably lived in one at Rome, and would love its religious calm for the sake of his own improvement.

For the account of this indeed and the remaining events of St. Ninian's life, and the institutions and system which he adopted, we are chiefly indebted to the accounts of his miracles, which form the rest of St. Aelred's life. But this, for obvious reasons, will not appear a valid reason for questioning their truth, considered as common facts. A long time, certainly, had elapsed between St. Ninian and St. Aelred ; and though we must put at a much higher date the composition of the life, from which St. Aelred derived his history, still some considerable time may have intervened, during which we must trust to the traditions of his Church. It may then be said we have little evidence for these facts ; we have, however, all which the circumstances of the case admitted. And we have this in particular that they were believed by men, who had much more means of judging than we possess. They were believed, I mean on the whole, for it is very possible that Alcuin, St. Aelred, and the Scottish Church generally, received them as they were handed down, not attempting to distinguish—to receive part or to reject part, where they had little or no grounds for making such distinction. To us however they convey much real information as to the way of life of the Saint. I do not mean by mentioning circumstances which might have been inserted by the narrator ; but by the facts which form the very groundwork of the story, so that if the miracle was believed, which it must have been in very early times, it must

have been the case that these facts were also generally believed. And a general and early belief in common facts would be admitted as evidence by many who would hesitate to receive it for uncommon ones, particularly if these common facts were what might otherwise be expected. Nay, we may go further ; they who consider that St. Ninian was a friend of St. Martin's, engaged in the work of converting a barbarous people, and who are familiar with the authentic history of the saints of that age, will look on miracles as things be expected, as what under the circumstances were natural ; and so they will, in the same way, give an assent to the miraculous narration, as what may very possibly, at least, be true ; though from the nature of the evidence they would not positively affirm it in each particular case ; and in the same spirit they may praise God for His glories thus manifested, as they may for those of His natural works, though they are in doubt or error as to the physical facts. Hymns are not the less religious because they are philosophically untrue ; nor is the piety unacceptable which saw traces of the deluge in the shells upon the mountain top, though recent investigations have taught us to doubt of their connexion.

To return, then, to our history ; it appears that one of St. Ninian's earliest works was the formation of a religious community, where he and his Clergy might live together, having all things in common. It is of course most probable, that he adopted the plan from those of St. Eusebius of Vercelli, St. Augustine, and especially St. Martin, and that his society, as theirs did, would consist of laymen as well as clergy.

The evident advantages of such an institution led to its general adoption in the missions of the following

age. It was a home where sympathy, support, and counsel, might be had from men like minded, and engaged in labouring the same great ends. Hither men were gathered, who desired to serve God more entirely than they could do in the world, to lead a heavenly life, in contemplation, prayer, and praise. It became a very school of sanctity, where men earnestly desiring virtue associated round one of known sanctity, to be guided by him in their way to heaven, to copy the traits of holiness in him and in their brethren. Thus was a body formed which gave light to others, so that men were drawn out of the contaminating and lowering influence of the world, and brought together under a strict rule and with a professed aim after holiness.

And this must have been of singular importance at a time when Christianity was now becoming the religion of the many, and whole nations were being converted. It presented a difficult problem to the heathen philosopher, how the mass of society could be renewed, when the few in whom the principle of goodness was implanted were scattered, unseen, and lost among the numbers who surrounded them, and by whose way of life, as they possessed no higher visible standard, they were lowered and corrupted. The Gospel undertakes to effect it by gathering out these scattered instances of goodness, and uniting them in one visible society, by the tie of a professed standard of practice ; to be a city set on a hill, a light put upon a candlestick ; providing, moreover, for training up, and forming the characters of others, by instruction in the truth, and a life regulated by holy discipline. Such was the Church itself, in its first ages, when the few Christians were closely bound together, and broadly distinguished from the unbelievers who surrounded them. At the time, however,

when this was no longer possible, when the world came into the Church, and all were members of that society, it pleased God gradually to introduce into the Church itself minor combinations of its holiest members, who, without the danger of individual profession, and bound by obligations which humbled them in the thought of their shortcomings, might continue as memorials of what had existed in a former age, and schools and models of practical religion. We have schools for all other arts, for all those acquirements which need rules and practice, and, above all, imitation, seeing how others do what we wish to learn. In secular matters we recognize the advantage of an experienced teacher and corrector, of being united with others engaged in the same pursuits, and of the improvement derived from observing how they attain to excellence, or how they fail in the minute details of their daily work ; surely it is only reasonable to have some similar institutions for learning the most important and the most difficult of all acquirements, that of a holy life, and the practice of the varied graces of the Christian character. How many a practical difficulty might thus be solved ! How many a soul which had entangled its course, and rendered its perceptions of duty obscure and uncertain, might here be relieved ! The chief part of Christians have duties in the world, and they have, amongst the Saints, patterns and guides for leading a devout life in the discharge of those duties : but some are ever called to a life where they may serve God more directly, and these are especial means of keeping up the general tone of religion, and supply helps and encouragements, as well as a true standard, for those who are in the world.

Such may the Saints of Whithern have been, pre-

senting by their purity, meekness, heavenly mindedness, and peace, a specimen of what the fruit of Gospel righteousness is ; a contrast to the pride, and worldliness, and violence, which reigned among the heathen ; and a special means of attracting to the Church, all in whom the elements of purity and goodness had life and activity. Devotion was the end of their association and their rules—to imitate on earth an angelic life ; to this all was subordinate ; for this they rose betimes, they fasted, they watched, they kept a constant guard on their senses and their thoughts. Thus to please God they cultivated all Christian graces, humility, obedience, and love ; they were silent to converse with God, turning their eyes from the objects of earth, that the mind might see those of heaven, and seeking in this life to be cheerful, resigned, and happy. The system of the monks would necessarily have its modifications when adopted by clergy, whose office called them to be accessible to their people, to go out on journeys and to preach and to administer the Sacraments to a scattered people. But even then they carried with them in silence, recollection, and prayer, and the devout saying of their Psalter, the spirit and the practices of their holy home, and by their gentleness and humility would win over the poor and simple people among whom they laboured.

They probably supported themselves by their own labour, and such voluntary offerings as might be made to the Church. The former belonged to their life as monks, the latter as clergy. Their chief food was vegetables ; leeks are especially mentioned ; these were the produce of a garden of their own, which was under the care of one of the brethren, whose business it was

thence to provide the supply necessary for their daily repasts. It was a simple life deriving support from the grateful earth ; a condition which maintained in them a continual dependence on Him who feeds the young ravens, and enabled them to sympathize with the poor ; as being themselves without provision from day to day, and having really made themselves poor for the sake of Christ. Nor should it surprise us that at times they were almost in want of the necessaries of life ; since, for some time, St. Ninian had to struggle against much opposition, and his labours seemed to produce scarcely any fruit.

It was in such a time of need that the traditions of Galloway represent the Saint as receiving a supply of food by miracle. And before we allow ourselves to judge lightly of the simple tale, let us recall the numerous instances in Holy Writ in which miracles were wrought for supplying bodily wants ; perhaps there is no class of which the cases are so many. The Bishop and his brethren went one day into the Refectory, but their usual meal of leeks and other herbs did not appear. The brother who should have provided them was called. He had only the disappointing tale to tell, that they had no provisions left, all the leeks had been put into the ground for seed, and none remained for them to eat. Perhaps it had been a bad season and their garden crops had failed. The Saint bid him go to the garden and bring what he found. He was astonished at the command, knowing there was nothing there, but habitual obedience and the thought that the Bishop could not command any thing without good reason prevailed. He went, and behold, the process of nature was anticipated, and the herbs were found not grown up only

but in seed. There is a very useful lesson at least taught here, to obey though it seems useless ; difficulties vanish from the path of the determined.

And by this simple way of life, and the exercise of useful arts, as the Egyptian monks made mats or baskets, and the cultivation of their garden, and afterwards by keeping flocks and herds, they would suggest many a useful lesson to the uncivilized people around them, and introduce among them improvements which were otherwise unknown. This has ever been a part of the work of missionaries in barbarous nations, tending to the real improvement of the people, winning a way to their good will, and teaching them to look up, in things spiritual, to those who were so willing and able to help them in earthly concerns.

But there was one other object to which St. Ninian made his monastery especially subservient. His own religious history, the wants he had felt, and the privileges he had enjoyed, and the very design for which he had returned to Britain, would lead him to regard sound theological training as of the utmost importance for his clergy. He had himself sought in vain for those who could teach him the truth ; he had seen the evils which resulted from the want of a steady holding to the right faith, in the unsettledness and spiritual deadness which prevailed. He had come to remedy those evils. Where could it be better effected than in his college ? This was healing the fountain, it was providing that those who, each in his own sphere, was to teach others, should himself be in doctrine as well as life a model for them to imitate. The advantages he had enjoyed at Rome he came to impart to Britain ; and the monastery at Whithern was the place where

the system of theological teaching he has known there would be adopted for his own clergy.

He would himself first, as they were able to bear it, lead them into a full and exact knowledge of the truths of religion, by such a course of oral and catechetical instruction, as would transfuse into their minds the great ideas with which his own was impressed. He would accustom them by rule and instance to an accurate literal exposition of Scripture, and still more to that wonderful system of mystical interpretation, which the spiritual mind spontaneously suggests, and, when duly instructed in it, carries through the whole of Scripture. And in both he would aid them by the study of the works of the earlier fathers, and of the living lights of the Church, the great masters of dogmatical and interpretative Theology, St. Augustine and St. Jerome. Nay, it will appear that he perpetuated his teaching by composing works, probably for their benefit. In consequence Whithern became a school from which the teachers of the northern Church were sent out.

Another very important part of his institution was a school for the young, rising up, as in some of our Sees, under the shadow of the Cathedral, as in olden times it formed an essential part of the Capitular establishment. It was most important to rescue, as far as might be, the children of heathen or evil-minded parents from the contaminating influence of their homes, and both with them and others to keep the young mind from losing the innocence of its regeneration, and to train it in habits of virtue, and the knowledge of the truth. It was indeed sowing seeds, which might for a long time seem buried, but would at last grow up to noble trees. And from among the breth-

ren, as in after times, there would be found those who teach the little ones, and themselves be both refreshed and improved by it. Refreshed by the sweetness and simplicity of their innocent minds, naturally thinking no evil, without anxiety, ambition, or guile ; which is to the harassed mind what a garden of flowers is to the weary, where they may repose amid fair objects, and where all is peace. Improved, because their own ideas would be cleared, and made more real by having to impart their knowledge to the unsophisticated minds of children. Nor was the Bishop without his own share in the work. He taught the children himself, not unmindful of the precept to feed the lambs, just as Gerson, the great Chancellor of Paris, is said through life to have maintained the practice of weekly catechising little children. It was a mark of the sweetness of St. Ninian's character that he was loved and revered by his little ones ; and this circumstance was so prominent among his works that the characteristic which one historian gives him is, that he was a distinguished trainer of children.

Connected with this, there was a story for which people could, in St. Aelred's time, point to what were held to be living evidences, which brings out the Bishop as the father of these little ones. But it is best to adopt or paraphrase the words of St. Aelred. " Many, both of the more noble and the middle rank, placed their children under the care of the Saint, to be taught the knowledge of religion. These he instructed with learning, and formed to habits of virtue, restraining by wholesome discipline the faults to which their age is liable, and implanting virtues by which they might live in sobriety, justice, and piety." It happened on a time that one of the boys offended,

and preparations were made to punish him. The boy, in alarm, ran away ; but knowing the power and goodness of the Saint, and thinking he should find a solace in his flight if he did but take with him anything belonging to the good Bishop, he took off the staff on which St. Ninian used to support himself. In his eagerness to escape he looked out for a boat which might carry him away. The boats of the country St. Aelred then describes. They were of wicker work, large enough to hold three men ; over this wicker work a hide was stretched, and the boat would float and be impervious to the waves. They are the same boats which Pliny and Cæsar describe, and in which the Britons would cross the sea to France or Ireland, or even go voyages of many days. They are called currachs or coracles ; they were long in use in the Western Isles, and still are among the fishermen on the Wye.

There happened just then to be many large ones making ready on the shore. The wicker work was finished, but the hides not put on. He very incautiously got in, and the light boat at first kept on the top of the waves, the water not at once making its way through ; soon however it did so, and there seemed no prospect but that it must fill and go down. He knew not whether to run the risk of leaping out or staying and sinking. In the moment of his distress, however, he thought of the holiness and power of St. Ninian ; contrite for his fault, as though weeping at his feet, he confesses his guilt, entreats pardon, and by the most holy merit of the Saint begs the aid of Heaven. Trusting, with childlike simplicity, that the staff was not without its virtue, as belonging to the Saint, he fixed it in one of the openings. The water

retreated, and, as if in fear, presumed not to pour in." "These," says the saintly Aelred, "these are the works of Christ, Who did say to His disciples, he that believeth in Me the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater things than these shall he do."

A gentle wind arose and forced on the little boat, the staff supplied the place of sail, and rudder, and anchor to stay his course. The people crowding on the shore saw the little ship, like some bird swimming along the waves, without either oar or sail. The boy comes to shore, and to spread more widely the fame of the holy Bishop, he in strong faith, fixed the staff in the ground, and prayed that as a testimony to the miracle, it might take root, send forth branches, flowers, and fruit. Presently the dry wood shot out roots, was clothed with fresh bark, produced leaves and branches, and grew into a considerable tree. Nay, to add miracle to miracle, at the root of a tree a spring of the clearest water burst forth, and poured out a glassy stream, which wound its way with gentle murmurs, grateful to the eye, and, from the merits of the Saint, useful and health-giving to the sick.

With what interest would this tale be told to the pilgrim strangers, and the tree and fountain shewn as the evidences of its truth in those days of simple faith ! And with hearts lifted up to God, and trusting in the aid of St. Ninian's prayers, many a poor sick man would drink of the clear stream.

Men of this day may smile at their simplicity ; but better surely is the mind which receives as no incredible thing, the unusual interposition of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will ; better the spirit which views the properties of a salubrious spring as the gift of God, granted to a faith-

ful and holy servant, than that which would habitually exclude the thought of the Great Doer of all, by resting on the Laws of Nature as something independent of Him, not, as they are, the way in which He usually works ; or thanklessly, and as a matter of course receive the benefit of some mineral waters.

However, we were speaking of St. Ninian's school, and we have seen the aged Bishop, for the event is related near the close of his life, leaning on his staff, and ordering the boys to be punished ; and we see too what kind of scholars he had, and how deep was their veneration for him, even when they were doing wrong ; how simple their faith in the presence and power of the Almighty.

Another narrative brings more before us the personal habits and religious life of St. Ninian, and this we should much wish to know. We have followed him through his holy childhood, and his pure and humble youth, have seen in opening manhood his deep and reverend love of Divine knowledge—his relinquishing the world—his progress in piety and perception of the Truth. And one characteristic which had been formed and strengthened by his obedient love of Him, who is unseen, was now brought out, the fixedness of his thoughts amid the distractions of the world, and his attention to Divine things. This indeed is the state in which reason shows us we ought to be ; for it is to have our thoughts dwelling on what is true, permanent, and most concerning, instead of what is transient and unreal. And to him its effects were most blessed, enabling him to sustain a calm and tranquil mind amid the hurry and trials of his toilsome work ; leading an angel's life, diligent and laborious, and doing all things perfectly, as the angels unceasingly minister

for us ; but without excitement and hurry, even as they, by retaining the contemplation of the Divine glory, and a simple union with the Divine will, are undisturbed. It had doubtless ever been his practice from the time that as a child he turned his thoughts and loving affections towards his Heavenly Father, and afterwards dwelt in pious meditation on the truths he laboured so earnestly to learn. And he sustained it by keeping a constant guard against wandering, dissipated thoughts ; by occupying his mind in holy things, that the house which had been swept and garnished, might yet never be found empty ; by not seeking to know anything which did not concern him. He was assisted by a practice which we often read of in the lives of Saints, that of reading or saying the Psalms, or earnest meditation, at times when circumstances would most tend to dissipate the thoughts ; which probably every one feels to be the case in those seemingly unoccupied times, when one has to walk or travel alone. Then it is for most people, perhaps, impossible to keep the thoughts fixed without some external help, the very moving and changes that occur distract and unsettle them. To guard against this and another evil, that of idle and vain conversation, St. Ninian, on his journeys, always carried his Psalter and some book for religious reading ; and, besides saying the Psalms, when he stopped to rest, or to refresh his horse, (for he used to ride on his long travels through the rough woods and hills of his diocese,) he would take out his book and read with careful attention.

And to secure himself from any unnecessary occasions of distraction, he seems to have observed the rules which our good Bishop Wilson gave himself, and so has most forcibly given us. “Never be curious to

know what is passing in the world, any further than duty obliges you ; it will only distract the mind when it should be better employed." "The best way to prevent wandering in prayer is not to let the mind wander too much at other times, but to have God always in our minds in the whole course of our lives."

We may here quote the beautiful language of St. Aelred. It was intended as a lesson for lay people, living at home, as well as for professedly religious men. It was to be read in the long winter evenings in the hall, as well as in the refectory. It has been read in many a house and many a monastery, in the olden times of merry England ; it may have awakened then a sense of the importance of guarded thoughts, and the danger of curiosity. It may do so for some one now.

"When I think," says the good Abbot, "of the very religious habits of this most holy man, I am filled with shame at the slothfulness of this our miserable generation. Which of us, I ask, even at home among the members of his own family, does not in social intercourse and conversation, introduce more frequently jocose than serious subjects, idle rather than useful, carnal than spiritual ones. Those lips which Divine grace has consecrated to praise the Lord, or to celebrate the holy mysteries, are daily polluted by detraction and worldly talk, and whilst they feel a distaste for the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Prophets, they run the live-long day through the vain and shameful works of men. And when they travel, is not the mind like the body, in continual wandering, the tongue in idleness to any good ? Reports of the characters of ungodly men are continually brought forward ; the gravity suited to a religious man is destroyed by laughing and stories ; the affairs of Kings, the duties of Bishops,

the ministrations of the Clergy, the contentions of the powerful, above all, the life and character of every one is the subject of discussion. We judge every thing except our own judgment; and what is more to be grieved at, we bite and devour one another, so that we are consumed one of another. Not so the blessed Ninian; crowds hindered not his tranquillity, nor did travelling interfere with his meditations, nor his devotions become lukewarm through lassitude. Wherever he was journeying he raised his mind to heavenly objects in prayer or contemplation, and when he turned aside on his journey, to rest himself or his horse, he delighted to take out a little book, which he always carried for the purpose, and read, or said Psalms, for he felt what the Prophet David says, "How sweet are Thy words unto my throat, yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth."

Nay it was said so highly favoured was his practice, that by special grace the very rain was turned aside from falling on him, forming as it were a vault above and around him. And once it happened, to give the substance of St. Aelred's narrative, that he and his brother, called Plebeia, a man of equal holiness, were on a journey, and as was their wont, so-laced themselves with the Songs of David. When they had travelled some distance they turned from the public road to rest themselves awhile, opened their Psalters, and were refreshing their souls with religious reading. Presently, the bright clear sky was clouded over, and the rain fell heavily; the thin air, however, like an arched vault, formed over the servants of God, and continued as an impenetrable wall against the falling waters. Whilst, however, they were saying their Psalms, St. Ninian turned his eyes

from the book, an unlawful thought, nay, an unrestrained desire, affected his mind. The supernatural protection was withdrawn, and the rain fell on him. No useless lesson this—that the unseen guardianship which is over us in prayer, which screens us from evil, that the grace which is then around us, is for the time withdrawn, if wilful distractions are admitted. His brother observed the change, and understood the cause ; he gently reminded him of his fault, and the Saint, coming to himself, blushed at having been carried away by foolish thoughts, and in the same instant he threw off the imagination, and the rain was stayed.

It is to be hoped the reader will rather seize the lesson this ancient tale affords, than smile at its simplicity. Who can say how many a wandering thought has been checked by thinking of it, when the brethren of Whithern, day by day, and year after year, said their Psalter in St. Ninian's Church—checked by recalling the lesson which it teaches ; of evil kept off from the soul by earnest attention, and falling unrestrained upon it when we wilfully wander.

The next miracles are connected with the trials of St. Ninian. His portion, as that of all the saints, was to follow in his Master's steps, to labour for the unthankful, to win souls by suffering, to endure reproach, to bless those that cursed him. There are intimations incidentally occurring in the latter part of his life, which shew that he was often in danger from powerful men, and exposed even to the loss of life.

The chief opposer of his labours was a king of those parts, called Tudual ; the prince, perhaps, of the whole tribe of the Novantes. He was, for a Galwegian chieftain, wealthy, powerful, and influential, but withal

proud, grasping, and the slave of passion and unbridled license and ambition. It may easily be conceived that he felt the opposition which existed between his own spirit and St. Ninian's, and instinctively resisted him. He felt that he belonged to a kingdom which must fall before that, of which the Bishop was a minister, and strove the more earnestly because his time was short. The admonitions of the holy preacher were disregarded, his lessons of righteousness, temperance, and judgment were derided ; his teaching, nay his holy life, were assailed and detracted from ; all the influence the prince possessed was exercised to withstand him, and his doctrine was met with open and direct opposition. For a time the enemy summoned so much strength, and exercised so wide and baneful an influence, that it seems as if the conversion of the people was becoming hopeless. It was as a land on which the gentle dew and rain from heaven fell in vain ; it brought forth no fruit, but only thorns and thistles, and seemed nigh to be given up as accursed and reprobate.

But the prayers and patient sufferings of the Holy Brotherhood at Whithern, went up for a memorial ; they wielded the weapons of the Saints, meekness, righteousness, and truth ; and their intercessions for their persecutors and defamers prevailed. When their cause seemed hopeless, the Divine arm was lifted up to help them. He who took the lead in resisting them, the resolute persecutor and opposer of the truth, felt a hand laid on him to stay his course. Tudual was seized by a violent illness, which ended in the loss of sight. Laid on a bed of suffering, and precluded from the sight of the outward world, reflection brought him to himself. His conscience recalled the marked events of his soul's history, and his opposition to St.

Ninian would be the most prominent. The possibility of all proving true which he had often scoffed at ; the consciousness of his wrong doings, even according to his own ideas of wrong ; the undefined dread of future retribution, all would combine to awaken consideration. Then the purity of the Christians' lives—their present peace—their future hopes—would suggest the thought how much better it were to be as one of them ; nay, that there was something in them more than human ; the miracles scoffed at before would recur to his memory, and the truth of the Saint's claims take possession of his mind. So it was ; a light spread through the soul, whilst the outward organs were in darkness. Repentance and confession of his wrong doings followed, and without delay he called for his friends, took their advice, and sent them with expressions of contrition and humiliation to St. Ninian. He besought him not to treat him as he knew he deserved, but to imitate the mercifulness of his Lord, to return good for evil, love for hatred.

We may imagine the deep joy which the holy Bishop felt at the return of one who seemed lost for ever. In his mind there was no place for glorying over a fallen enemy, no notion of personal triumph, no revengeful delay of reconciliation, but a going out to meet him whom he saw afar off. He offered up first a prayer to God, a prayer of thankfulness for this work of His grace, a prayer that his enemy might be freed from his sufferings, and at once set out with the utmost humility and devotion. At first he gently reproved him for his sin, then with healing hand touched his head, and impressed upon his eyes the sign of our salvation. At once the pain was gone and the blindness departed. Tudual became a sincere convert, humility and purity took the

place of his former vices, and he devoted himself to St. Ninian's guidance, treating him with the deepest reverence, as recognizing that God was indeed with him and guided him in all his ways. The effect of this miracle of Divine grace in the conversion, even more than in the cure of the strenuous persecutor must have been very great. The power and influence which had been used to oppose, would now be devoted to aid the cause of religion, and so exercised, would indeed produce their true and proper results. To this time, probably, we may assign the general conversion of the people.

It was, perhaps, during the period of the previous persecution that the event occurred which St. Aelred next narrates. It was important as removing a scandal which might have stood greatly in the way of the progress of religion. It seems that clergy were fixed, whether before St. Ninian's arrival, or by him, in separate districts, which St. Aelred, in the language which would be most intelligible to his readers, designates as parishes. An unhappy girl who had been seduced by a powerful master, at his instigation, accused the clergyman of being the father of her child. The effect was astounding. The good were distressed ; the weak offended ; the wicked rejoiced ; and the low-minded ridiculed ; the whole sacred order was blasphemed by the ungodly. St. Ninian, however, was inwardly assured of the innocence of the priest ; and in full trust took the most public means of manifesting it. He proceeded to the Church, summoned the clergy and whole body of the people, preached and then confirmed. The mother appeared with her child and openly denounced the priest ; the utmost excitement prevailed ; shame and derision were the portion of the good ; when St. Ninian called on the child just born

to declare his father ; a voice was given to the infant and the truth declared.

One other miracle is recorded, which, like the one of the school boy, was associated with a permanent record in the name of the place, and a mark in a stone which, in St. Aelred's days, was shown in Galloway. But now we know nothing of the stone, and Pinkerton says, there is no place which he knows of the name. The miracle itself is, in some points, like one narrated by the Ecclesiastical historian, Sozomen, of St. Spiridion, a shepherd Bishop in Cyprus, who continued his simple employment in the care of flocks, after he was chosen to be a shepherd of souls. Of course there is no reason why the miracle should not have been performed by both saints. And if there be reason to think that the Almighty did exercise miraculous powers through His Saints, and that around them and in them there was a spiritual agency at work, let us be cautious how we judge these tales, let us tread carefully on what may be hallowed ground.

The story is this. St. Ninian and his brethren had many flocks and herds, which they kept for their own use ; for milk and cheese would be monks' fare ; and for hospitality to strangers and the use of the poor ; making provision to fulfil the precept which Bishops and their chapters and all monasteries were used to keep in mind, to exercise hospitality without grudging. These cattle were kept in pasture grounds, at some distance from the monastery, and St. Ninian went to bless the herds and their keepers. The Bishop had them all brought together, lifted up his hands, and committed himself and all that was his to the guardianship of God. He then went round them, and with his staff marked the ground within the limits

of which they were to stay, something like what was afterwards done as a superstitious spell. He then retired to the house of an honourable matron where he and his brethren were to lodge. After refreshing themselves with food, and their souls with the word of God, they retired to rest. Meanwhile robbers arrive, and seeing the herds unenclosed and unguarded, expect an easy prey. The cattle remain quiet, no sound is heard, no dog even is heard to bark ; they enter within the limits, but do it to their cost. The bull of the herd attacks and severely gores the ringleader of the thieves, and himself, digging his hoof violently into the ground, impresses the mark of it on the rock, as if in wax. The mark remained, and the place was called in Saxon, Farres Last, that is, the Bull's foot-mark, Tauri Vestigium, as the Latin life explains it. Meanwhile after his regular morning prayers, St. Ninian arrives, finds the poor robber with his entrails torn out, and now lifeless, and the others running about as if insane, within the limit he had marked around the cattle. He was deeply moved with pity, and entreated that the robber might be restored to life ; nor did he cease from prayers and tears till the same Power which had caused his death restored him again to life. The other robbers who seemed possessed on seeing St. Ninian, fell at his feet in fear and trembling, and begged forgiveness. He kindly reproved them, pointed out the punishment which awaited the robber, and at last, after giving them his blessing, allowed them to depart. The result was the sincere conversion of the man whose life had been restored.

Perhaps the strangeness of this narrative ought not to be any hinderance to our believing it. As the most wonderful instance of his prayers being heard, even to

bringing the dead to life, its circumstances are especially dwelt on in the religious services for his day. And we are sure the people of Galloway would have been disappointed, if they had not found this story in the Life of their own Sainted Bishop ; for like the tree and the spring, Farres Last must have made an early and deep impression on their minds ; and often doubtless was the story told to the stranger who passed that way, and to their own little ones, and they would go to see the deep impression of the bull's foot ; and the sermon which St. Ninian had preached would be afresh inculcated, and the fact appealed to as the most vivid evidence of the wrongness and the possible unexpected evil which might at any time await the cattle stealer.

We may now pass on to St. Ninian's conversion of the Southern Picts, of whom he is designated the Apostle.

CHAPTER VIII.

Conversion of the Picts.

THE labours of St. Ninian extended over a wide district ; and were exercised among great troubles and dangers, from the unsettled state of the country, and the continual hostilities which prevailed. The tract of country, which, so far as we know, had no Pastor but himself, stretched from sea to sea, and, besides the (now) English portion of it, from the wall of Antoninus to that of Severus. The Western part, however, was his special care. The rest was a scene of war and rapine during the chief part of his Episcopate ; and

after fruitless endeavours to repel the inroads of the mountaineers, the Roman forces were at length withdrawn A. D. 410, and the Provincials left to defend themselves as best they could.

The tribes of St. Ninian's diocese had retained their original divisions of clans, and though they were rendered less fit to cope with the unsubdued and uncivilized portions of the same great Celtic race, whom we know as Picts, they yet combined, and maintained themselves as a distinct people in possession of their territory. The Picts might rob, but do not seem to have displaced them. The separate princes united in the election of a common leader, and though harassed by internal broils and breaches of their federal compact, the Western tribes, with the exception of Galloway, continued for six centuries as an independent body, forming the British kingdom of Strathclydd. During all the wars which rent this unhappy district, Britons, Picts, and Scots, it is said, united in reverencing St. Ninian. He was allowed to travel, without molestation, through countries which were the seat of war. His calm presence seemed to breathe of peace and love, and to inspire awe even in the wildest barbarians. It has been so in these latter times. The Isle of Man was to be spared by the French, for the sake of Bishop Wilson, and in the wars of the Low Countries at the beginning of the last century, the Archbishop of Cambray was treated with reverence by all the contending parties, and made his Episcopal journeys unmolested in the midst of hostilities.

Who can say that it was not owing to the influence of the holy truths, and the practical goodness inculcated by St. Ninian, that the tribes of his diocese did

so unite and retain a social life after the convulsions which resulted from the departure of the Romans ?

And now, after many years of patient toil and assiduous teaching, having brought the people, immediately committed to him, to some unity of faith and goodness of life ; his ardent desire for the salvation of men prompted him to undertake the conversion of a tribe, who did not as yet know the name of Christ, and were bitterly hostile to his own countrymen. These were the Southern Picts, a division of the numerous tribes, who, secured by the mountains of the Highlands, had never submitted to the yoke of the Romans, and now in the decline of their power revenged themselves on them, and on the tribes of their own island, who had yielded and been civilized by them.

It seems that Caledonians and Picts are but different names for the same people, given originally to one tribe or other, according to the circumstances of their localities or ways of life, and then borne by all in common. As inhabitants of the forests of the Lowlands they had early had the name of Woodmen, Caledones, given them. Another portion again who occupied the plain country between the Grampians and the sea, to the north of the Frith of Forth, were called Peithi, a name which signifies inhabitants of the open country, and by the Romans, Picti, (as the Welsh peithen is from the Latin pecten, and effaith is from effectus,) and from them the whole race received the name. It was the coincidence between their own Celtic name, and their painted bodies, which gave a point to the well known line of Claudian, "non falso nomine Picti," which would have had little force, if they were only called so, because of their being painted. These

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inhabitants of the plain country are the Southern Picts. Those who remained in the fastnesses were called Northern Picts, and the distinction of these two portions of the race would become more marked, from the different habits of life, which would gradually result from their different localities. The distinction was recognized in the middle of the fourth century, when they were respectively called by the Romans, Deucaledones, and Vecturiones ; of which the former, it is said, means separate or far Caledonians, those, that is, farther removed from the Roman districts ; and Vecturiones is another Celtic form of Picts, P and V being interchanged, and the rest of the word, Peithwyr, or Peithwyron, differing from simple Picts, as Englishmen does from English.

These Vecturiones—they to whom the name of Pict first belonged, are the tribe of which St. Ninian was the Apostle. They had first established themselves on the Eastern coast, as has been said, north of the Frith of Forth and of the Roman wall ; and many authors confine them to this district. Others say that after the withdrawal of the Roman forces they passed the wall, poured in upon the Eastern coast of Valentia, and took up a position which they permanently occupied, south of the Forth, in the Lothians, and even reaching to Northumberland ; they had previously acquired more settled habits than the mountaineers, and so were fitted to establish themselves permanently in the countries they subdued. They existed as a separate people in the time of Bede, who accurately distinguishes them from those who lived within the mountain district. It was, he says, when St. Columba went to convert the Northern Picts, that he found

the Southern ones had been converted previously, and, as they stated, by St. Ninian.

It seems most probable that it was after their occupation of the country south of the Forth, (supposing they did occupy it,) that he went amongst them. It was that occupation which gave them a more distinct and permanent nationality ; nor is it to be supposed, that they should have become Christians, and afterwards have attacked with so much cruelty the people to whom they were indebted for the knowledge of the Gospel ; we will not think so ill of them, barbarians as they were. And the dates would lead to the same conclusion. The Romans retired in 410. Ninian had then been thirteen years in Galloway. He lived for twenty-two years longer. The first thirteen years would not be more than enough for the work he had to effect among his own people. The last twenty-two allow space for the Picts to have come down and occupied the Eastern portion of Valentia, and to have been visited and converted by St. Ninian.

They had overrun and seized on a part, the farthest from his Church, of that wide field which had been committed to his care. He was not then going beyond his measure in endeavouring to win them over. It is an early and a beautiful instance of the power of the Church to reduce under her saving sway, and by the armour of truth, meekness, and righteousness, those whom carnal weapons had in vain opposed—to lead captive the conqueror.

“It deeply grieved the Holy Bishop,” St. Aelred proceeds, “that Satan, when he had now been driven from the rest of the world, had found a place in the hearts of the Picts, in a corner of the island, near the ocean. He girt himself accordingly as an energetic

athlete to put down his tyranny, taking to himself the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breast-plate of love, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." As associates in his labours, as comforters, and advisers, after the example of St. Paul, he took with him a body of holy brothers, those of his Clergy and religious society, who were most suited for the work. Happily they had not to overcome the hinderance of a different language, for though the dialects of the various portions of the Celtic race were distinguished, there still remained a sufficient similarity to allow of their being mutually understood, even after a much longer and greater separation than had yet taken place ; as it is said the people of Brittany and the Welch now understand each other. They had however great difficulties to struggle against, in the antipathy which the free Celts entertained for those who had been under the Roman sway—an antipathy stronger than is felt towards people of quite a different race ; and again, from the circumstance that they were themselves the aggressors, who had seized on the territories of the Southern tribes. Still there was something calculated to melt their savage hearts in the presence of one among them so different from any they had known before, preaching the doctrines of purity, humility, and forgiveness ; whose graces, notwithstanding, would be recognized and loved by all in whom there was a principle of good. He was one of the people they had attacked, cruelly treated, and displaced, and he was amongst them, not with the tone of complaint upbraiding, or revenge, but meek and gentle, possessing a sweetness of temper, and a calm and cheerful mind, which he pointed out to them the means of attaining.

Their religion was the same as that of the other tribes of the island had formerly been, though one would suppose, in a more rude state of superstition than the richer portion of the people, among whom the Druids were so superior a caste. St. Ninian called them to forsake their idolatry and superstition, and to turn to that Almighty in Whom, though unknown, they yet believed ; to Him, Who gave them rain from heaven, filling their hearts with food and gladness. He called them from the conscious misery of their present state—from the bondage of vices which galled their very soul, to an obedience and submission, which at once brought relief. He told them of permanent existence, and a future responsibility, of which a voice within testified the truth ; and he professed himself the minister of a gracious dispensation, which would secure those who embraced it in a future dreadful day. This preaching would carry conviction with it to those prepared souls which are found amongst the uncivilized barbarians, as well as among simple rustics or refined philosophers. Wherever man is, there are hearts and consciences which will correspond to the simple doctrines of religion, and be conscious on hearing it of the truth that one thing is needful. But his words, it is said, were not unaccompanied by convincing signs that he was indeed what he professed, a messenger from that great unseen Being in whom they believed. He performed miracles among them. “The blind see,” St. Aelred says, “the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the possessed are set free from the demons that afflict them.” Thus does he apply the description of our Saviour’s works to those of His servant. “He that believeth on me the works that I

do, shall he do also, and greater things than these shall he do, because I go to the Father."

Perhaps had the evidence for these miracles been asked, the conversion of the people would have been appealed to as a sufficient proof—the effect most distinctly establishing the cause. And had the converts been asked the grounds on which they believed, an appeal to the miracles would probably have been their answer. Indeed, those who profess themselves ready to admit the probability of miracles, where there is an apparently adequate cause for them, must allow it in the case of the Gospel being preached to a barbarous people ; since the tangible and obvious evidence of a miracle is best calculated to affect them strongly, and to gain an attention for the preacher, which it would require a long life amongst them, and a long manifestation of the living miracle of a saintly character to obtain.

St. Ninian, it is said, first converted the king of the tribe, whose influence was exerted to further the general acceptance of the Gospel among his people. Such was at this period the usual course of conversion. In the earlier ages, individuals were gained over here and there, unknown to the world, and generally of humble rank, and from them the holy influence spread to relations and neighbours, and those who had the opportunity of seeing what the Gospel had wrought in them ; and so the leaven was diffused through the whole mass, and at last affected the rulers of the world. Afterwards the course was generally the reverse. Kings were converted, and brought their subjects over to the profession of Christianity. The early ages gained men by their own individual persuasion, and the work was slow. In the latter

period it was more rapid ; and if the converts were now more influenced by earthly motives, their posterity at any rate reaped abundant blessings from being brought into the fold of Christ. Perhaps this change is indicated, when after the lame and blind had not filled the feast, it is said that the last messengers were to compel men to come in.

It is but reasonable to suppose that St. Ninian's preaching was extended to those of the Southern Picts, who still continued in their earlier settlement north of the Frith of Forth. Indeed as has been said, many writers confine the settlement of this race to the northern districts, and do not suppose them to have had any permanent settlement south of the Roman Wall. The question however, is not of any importance in its bearing on a history of St. Ninian. Some again have confounded the southern Picts with the British inhabitants of Valentia. Others, with the race called Picts, who came from Ireland, and occupied Galloway in the ninth century, and who alone bore the name in the later period, when the proper Picts were lost among the other nations who occupied Scotland. St. Ninian was ever known as the Apostle of the Southern Picts, and as his proper mission was to the inhabitants of Galloway and Valentia generally, it was not unnatural to imagine these tribes to be those who are meant by the Southern Picts. They were however clearly a distinct tribe ; and it is a confirmation of the truth of St. Aelred's history that he does so distinguish them, as Bede had also done, and as the Collect for St. Ninian's day, in the Aberdeen Breviary, "*Deus, qui populos Pictorum et Britonum per doctrinam Sancti Niniani Episcopi et Confessoris docuisti.*"

It was not however enough to gain the people to a profession of the Gospel ; St. Ninian also provided for the permanent maintenance of the Church, by the consecration of Bishops, and regular establishment of Clergy. His biographer says, “he ordained Priests, consecrated Bishops, arranged the ecclesiastical Orders, and divided the whole country into parishes.” The last is noticed as an anachronism, as the system of parochial division did not generally arise till a much later period. It may however very probably mean nothing more than the division of the country, so that the Priests might each have his own definite sphere of labour ; which was very necessary in so wide and thinly peopled a district. In the consecration of Bishops we do not know whether St. Ninian acted alone, as was allowed in cases of necessity ; and would be the more so here, as he was not apparently included in any province, of which the other Bishops might assist in the consecration ; or whether some of the British Bishops joined in the sacred rite. They might still be remaining in their Sees, but were far removed from this country, and the hostilities and dangers which prevailed might hinder them from coming.

We are equally in ignorance as to the succession of the Bishopricks ; of which we know no more than of those of the ancient Britons. It was very possible that they might have been numerous, as those of Ireland were. Of the portion North of the Forth, Abernethy was the Bishoprick, and so continued till later times, the Bishop, or as he was sometimes styled, Archbishop of that See, being called the Bishop of the Picts. In all probability St. Ninian would leave some of his own clergy, as the Priests and Bishops of his new converts. They could not themselves so

soon have persons who could be entrusted with the sacred office of preserving the deposit of the truth, and St. Ninian, from his own experience, would be conscious of the value of a long and careful preparation for the sacred ministry. Nor is there any reason why we should not suppose that he revisited the Picts, and from time to time supplied what was wanting for the completeness of their ecclesiastical system. St. Aelred, indeed, speaks as if all had been done in one visit, but he might naturally adopt such a summary mode of narration when he was without any distinct information of the particulars of the visits. He passes on at the conclusion to the tranquillity which characterized the latter days of the Saint. "When he had confirmed the sons whom he had begotten in Christ in faith and good works, and arranged all which seemed necessary for the honour of God and the salvation of souls, the Saint bade farewell to his brethren, and returned to his own Church, where he spent the rest of his life, perfect in holiness, and glorious by his miracles, in great peace and tranquillity of mind."

By the Picts his name was remembered, and the Church he formed among them preserved. It was above a century after when St. Columba came amongst them, and they then professed Christianity, and mentioned St. Ninian as the Bishop by whom they had been converted.

CHAPTER IX.

St. Ninian's latter Days.

AND now that we have followed the Saint through the broken incidents of a holy and laborious life, there are few remaining points on which to dwell, but such as they are, they will be interesting to recount.

And first, of the personal habits of St. Ninian. Holy and spotless as he had been through life, it would seem as if he might have been free from penitential austerities, and have spared the hardnesses which others must use with themselves. But such views proceed on erroneous notions, since they contradict the practice of the most eminent saints. The most pure and holy have ever been the most severe in their mortifications. Holy men, such as he was, become, as it would seem, not only indifferent to worldly comforts, but lovers of suffering endured for Christ's sake, and that principally from the love of Him. It seems to them, so to say, unnatural to live at ease, when He endured so much on their account. And they may suffer in a way which corresponds to His sufferings, by suffering for their people, by accompanying their earnest intercessions with those acts of mortification which are natural in deep sorrow. There is ever before them the sight of some, lost to their true interests, passing day by day from a life of folly and forgetfulness into an unchanging state ; and yearning for their recovery and salvation, yet unable to effect it, when their words seem to them as idle tales, to weep, to fast, to pray, to endeavour to prevail with God for them is

their natural resource. Then again, in a deep humble sense of not having corresponded to the influence of Divine Grace ; the consciousness that though they have not wilfully and obstinately continued in sin, yet they have not improved duly the spiritual privileges afforded to them ; the knowledge of imperfection and tendencies to sin—all these are so clearly seen, and acutely felt by those who really love God, that the sorrows and afflictions of saints are ever penitential. Let us not then be surprised, if, when we draw near St. Ninian, and learn his secret ways, we do not find contrivances for comfort, or the enjoyment of life.

They show on the coast of Galloway, on the face of a lofty and precipitous line of rocks, against which one of the stormiest of our seas incessantly beats, a damp chilly cave, lying one third of the way, it may be, from the bottom of the cliff, and accessible only by climbing and springing from rock to rock. It is a deep recess, running back some twenty feet, and gradually narrowing from the mouth, where it may be twelve feet high, and as many wide. There is nothing to screen it from the winds and spray which beat against the rock, no bottom of earth to rest upon, but only bare uneven stone. Here, the tradition of the country says, St. Ninian used to come for penitential and devotional retirement ; and it is not improbable. For a religious person in those days, to retire to a cave, nay, to live in one all his life, was no strange thing ; it was but to follow in the steps of the confessors of the earlier dispensation, who lived in dens and caves of the earth. It was the ordinary practice of good people thus to deprive themselves of every earthly comfort, and to realize the time when they should be completely stripped of all which this

world can afford, in the cold and silent tomb. To practise as it were beforehand, what every one at some time must actually undergo, silence, and loneliness, and reflection ; without any thing of this world to occupy the thoughts, or to afford outward comfort. St. Ciaran, the Apostle of the Scoto Irish, had a cave in Kintire ; and near St. Andrew's, the place of of St. Rule's retirement, there are many caves which were the retreats of religious men ; and he whom St. Ninian specially revered, the Saint of Tours, as we have seen, lived with his associates in caves. It has been thought that they were places of concealment, to which a holy man might retreat from the persecution his preaching would excite ; and there was need St. Ninian should have such a protection, for he was not unfrequently in danger from the attacks of the obstinate and the unbelieving. One would rather, however, view them as places for religious retirement, and imagine the holy Ninian going aside to rest awhile, from the many who were coming and going, to withdraw at seasons from the hurry and distraction of his office, to consider his own state, to examine his spiritual progress, to mourn over what was evil, to deprecate the Divine displeasure, and to intercede for his people ; and surely it seems more fitting to do so in a lone and cheerless spot, out of the reach of men, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, with the wild winds howling around, and the sea and the waves roaring, and sea-birds screaming, than surrounded by comforts, and the appliances of luxury. And if it is rather probable antecedently, that St. Ninian should have a place of retreat, and the practice of the times would lead him to choose a

cave ; we should most naturally believe it to be that, which popular tradition has pointed out.

Another instance of his mortified life, not it is presumed uncommon in the histories of saints, is the practice, as it has been reported, of abstaining from all food during the awful season of our blessed Redeemer's sufferings, in sympathy, penitence, and love. It is said he tasted nothing from the evening of Maundy Thursday, till he had partaken of the Holy Sacrament on Easter Day.

There is an old Life of St. Ninian in Ireland, referred to by Archbishop Usher, which reports further acts of self-denial, and withdrawal from all that winds itself around the heart, even the dearest ties of blood. It says that the mother and relations of the Saint were used to visit him, and that to separate himself from all intercourse with them, he went over to Ireland, accompanied by some of his disciples, and there, on a piece of ground given him by the king, founded the monastery of Cluayn Coner, where he spent the rest of his life and died. The account of his retreat is one of those stories which may illustrate character, and show what it was thought he would do ; but as a matter of fact, it has no authority, and as regards his death, is contrary to the best testimony, which represents him as having died, and been buried in his own Church, at Whithern.

We have one more point in which to view St. Ninian, and then we will take leave of him—that is, as an author ; in which character he appears in the ancient collections of our national writers, by Leland, Bale and Pits. It is by no means improbable, indeed most likely, that he should commit to writing what would be for the good of his clergy and scholars. He had

stored up at Rome the lessons of the great teachers of the Church ; he had doubtless studied the writings of others, and himself through life meditated on the Holy Scriptures. He was now but perpetuating for the benefit of others, the spontaneous outpourings of his mind, or the solutions of those difficulties which were proposed to him. Such is the character of the writings which are attributed to him—Commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, and in particular, Meditations on the Psalms. These were the Meditations which had been the solace of his travels on the wilds of Galloway, the fruits of a deeply contemplative spirit exercised on those sacred words, which, by their continual repetition, and adaptation to the varying circumstances of the Christian life, are associated with our holiest thoughts. The other work of which the title is handed down, was one composed, doubtless, as a Theological Manual for the Clergy and Students of Whithern.¹ It was a collection of Sentences from the Fathers, of passages expressing their sentiments on points of doctrine and morals ; most probably arranged under heads, and so forming a body of divinity, and giving the most important portions—the very essence of their writings. The value of such a work to St. Ninian's clergy can scarcely be over-rated. They could not afford a large library, and might have read much without obtaining the advantages which such a selection would afford. It might, we may imagine, have been St. Ninian's work at Rome, where he had leisure and

¹ “ Ex iis autem quæ post se reliquit, aliqua saltem nomine tenus tenemus teste sexto senensi,

Meditationum in Psalmos Davidis librum unum ;

De Sanctorum Sententiis librum unum.”

Pitseus de Illustribus Britanniae Scriptoribus, p. 87.

free access to libraries, and where such a commonplace book would have proved a useful aid in his own studies, to enter the passages which he would most wish to preserve. For though the most voluminous of the Fathers, as we have them, were only sending out their works during his stay at Rome, there were many remains of older ones which we have lost. And he was now only making that which had been intended for his own reference and perusal, a benefit to others ; and very great was the use of such a selection, in instilling and preserving sound doctrine in the minds of those who were to teach others.

Such was St. Ninian, the young and noble Briton, who, for the love of Christ, and the true knowledge of Him, went forth from his country and his father's house. Such was he ; a laborious apostle, enduring toil, difficulty, and reproach, in bringing men to Christ ; a mortified ascetic, and meditative student ; a kind teacher of babes, a humble, gentle, and circumspect governor of a religious society. And great was the fruit of his labours, in the recovery and salvation of souls, great in the glory of which he himself was made a partaker.

His life had been continued till the year 432, that is above seventy years. During the last five-and-thirty, nearly half of the whole, he had laboured in the wild, barbarous, and unsettled country to which he had been appointed as a Missionary Bishop. Worldly honours, comforts, possessions, he had cast behind him. He lived for God, and to do His will. His peaceful days of study and meditation in the sacred city, he might look back upon as sweet and holy days, full of spiritual privileges, and the source of many a blessing ; but it

would be as one surrounded by the rich fruits of autumn, would look back on spring ; as very fair, and in its time seeming more pleasant, but chiefly valuable as instrumental towards the true good which he is now enjoying, though it may be, among many labours. But such labours, it has been beautifully said, are sweet—sweet as those of the husbandman, who rejoices in the heavier load of corn by the increased value of his possessions—sweet as to the gatherer of frankincense, by the delights elicited in his toils.

Advanced in years, surrounded by his spiritual children and friends, beholding the effect of his labours, the time is come for him to depart.—To adopt the words of St. Aelred, “To the blessed Saint himself that day was a day of joy and gladness ; to the people over whom he presided, one of tribulation and distress. He rejoiced, for heaven was opening to him. His people grieved at being deprived of such a Father. He rejoiced, for a crown of immortality was preparing for him. They were in sorrow, because their salvation seemed in danger. Nay, even the fulness of his joy was impaired by his love for them ; to leave them was a heavy trial, but to be longer separated from Christ, appeared beyond endurance.

“But while his soul was thus delaying, Christ consoles him, ‘Rise up,’ He said, ‘my beloved, my dove (in the English Version,¹ ‘my love, my fair one’), make haste, and come away.’ ‘Rise up, my beloved, rise up, my Dove.’ Rise up in thought, make haste by desire, come by affection. Suitable, indeed, were these words to this most blessed Saint, as one to whom, as the friend of the Bridegroom, that heavenly Bridegroom had com-

¹ Cant. ii. 10.

mitted his Bride, to whom He had revealed His secrets, and opened His treasures. Deservedly is that soul called beloved, in whom all is made up of love, and there is nothing of fear. 'My beloved,' He says, 'my dove.' My dove—a dove truly taught to mourn, that knew nothing of the gall of bitterness, but wept with those that wept, was weak with the weak, and burned for those that were offended. 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

" 'For lo ! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.' Then, O blessed Saint, the winter was indeed past to thee, when, with happy eye, thou didst gain the sight of thy heavenly country—that country which the Sun of righteousness illumines by the brightness of His light, which love warms, and a wonderful equality, like the attempering of the spring-time, regulates by an ineffable unity. Then the unseasonable winter which fills all on earth with discomfort, which hardens the frozen hearts of men by vices that fall upon them, where neither truth shines, nor love burns to the full—this was past and gone, and thy holy soul, completely triumphant, escaped from the showers of temptations, and the hail-storms of persecutions, into the beauty of perpetual verdure.

" 'The flowers,' he says, 'have appeared in our land. For around thee, O blessed Ninian, breathed the odours of the flowers of Paradise, when on thee, as on one most familiar to them, the multitudes of those that are clothed in crimson and white, smiled with placid countenance, and bid thee to their company—they whom chastity has clothed with white, and love with blushing crimson. For though no occasion was afforded thee to give the sign of bodily martyrdom, still that without which martyrdom is nothing, denied

not the merit of martyrdom. For so often as he offered himself to the swords of the perverse, so often as in the cause of righteousness he opposed himself to the arms of tyrants, he was prepared to fall in the cause of truth, and to die for righteousness. Deservedly then is he admitted among the flowers of the roses, and the lilies of the valley—himself clothed in crimson and white, going up from Lebanon to be crowned among the hosts of heaven.

“ ‘For the time of the vintage is come.’ For soon, as a full ripe cluster, he must be cut from the stem of the body, from the vineyard of the Church on earth, to be pressed by love, and laid up in the storehouses of heaven.

“ Thus the blessed Ninian, perfect in life, mature in years happily departed from the world, and attended by angelic spirits, was borne to heaven ; and there associated with the company of the Apostles, mingling with the ranks of Martyrs, and united to the bands of holy Confessors, adorned with the Virgins’ flowers, he ceases not to succour those on earth who hope in him, call on him, and praise him.

“ He was buried in the Church of St. Martin, which he had himself built from the foundation, and placed in a stone coffin near the altar, the Clergy and people standing by, and lifting up their heavenly hymns with heart and voice, with sighs and tears. And at this place the power which had shone forth in his life, ceases not in death to manifest itself around his body, so that all the faithful recognize him as living in heaven, because it is evident that he produces effects on earth. At his most sacred tomb, the sick are cured, the lepers are cleansed, the evil ones are affrighted, the blind receive their sight. And by all these things

the faith of believers is confirmed to the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen."

The death of St. Ninian occurred on the 16th of September, A.D. 432; and on that day his memory was celebrated in the Scottish Church, in Catholic ages, with deep veneration, as their chiefest Saint, to whom first they owed it, that they had been brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. The service for the day in the Aberdeen Breviary is very beautiful, and in connexion with his history, most interesting. It contains nine Lessons, extracted from St. Aelred's life, and throws into devotional form the various events we have been recording. The circumstances of his life and miracles are expressed in hymns and proses, antiphones and responses, which once were chaunted in his praise throughout all the Churches of Scotland. His name and day were noted in the Kalendar prefixed to the Scottish Prayer Book of King Charles the First.

The rest of St. Aelred's work is occupied by a detailed account of miracles wrought at the tomb of St. Ninian, which it is not necessary now to narrate. "When the Saint had been taken up to heaven," he says, "the multitude of the faithful continued to visit, with the deepest devotion, what seemed to be left them of him—his most holy remains, and out of regard to their piety and faith, the Almighty showed, by the evidence of numerous miracles, that, though the common lot of mortality had taken His Saint from the earth, yet he still lived in heaven." A distorted child was first restored; this led many to hasten to bring their varied diseases before his holy relics; in particular, a man

covered with a cutaneous disease of a most horrible kind was restored ; then a girl, who had lost her sight ; and two lepers were made clean by bathing in his spring. “ Through his prayers,” to quote a hymn for his day, “ the shipwrecked find a harbour, and the barren woman is blessed with offspring ;” and St. Aelred says that the power continued to be manifested even in his own times.

CHAPTER X.

Conclusion.

AND now, that we have followed St. Ninian through his laborious life to his peaceful rest, we may not unnaturally wish to know what became of his Church and people after he was taken from them. On this point however our information is very limited, and much is left to be inferred from probabilities.

He had introduced the Ritual and Observances of the Roman Church, which were certainly different from those which the Britons used. Of these however no traces can be discovered. It would seem as if they had been lost among the changes which occurred between his death and the time of Bede ; for, though that writer carefully sought for instances of conformity with Rome, he makes no mention of this, which would have been marked in itself, and known to the Saxons at Whithern. The Church of St. Ninian may herein have conformed to the practices of the other Britons, un-

der the Episcopate of St. Kentigern, or have quite sunk into obscurity.

We should naturally expect that the instructions he established, would, for a time at least, be maintained ; that the religious society would hold together, and continue its work, as a refuge of piety and teacher of religion ; and there is some confirmation of this expectation in the statement of Scottish historians, that St. Ninian's monastery was a school which supplied teachers for the people ; and that of Bede, that the body of the Saint, with those of many holy men rested in the Church of Whithern, as though there was there a home of Saints.

As regards the succession to his See, we are altogether without information. It is possible that in the troubled state of the country, when the Picts and Scots were so grievously afflicting the Britons, and when there certainly was so great a want of earnestness among the British Bishops, they may have neglected to supply a successor to St. Ninian ; and the monastery and country priests may have continued without a pastor, trusting to occasional missionary visits, such as those of Palladius and others. The Church he loved so well was now desolate, and a widow. This seems most probably to have been the case till the time of St. Kentigern, who fixed his See at Glasgow, and included in his diocese the district which had been St. Ninian's care, and it is said, completed the work of conversion. That diocese, as has been stated before, extended over the south-west of Scotland, and the Cumbrian Britons, as far as Stainmoor ; and Whithern, whether it retained its monastery or not, became subordinate.

Meanwhile the Saxons were occupying England ;

were themselves being converted ; and their power rapidly increasing, accompanied by a depth and earnestness of religion, perhaps unequalled in any people. From being the most barbarous, they became the most devout. The nation seemed a really Christian nation, and England was indeed an Isle of Saints. A spirit of piety was diffused through every class. Political measures were in consequence determined by the principles of the Gospel ; and Saxon conquests were Christian ones, subordinate to the great objects of extending the privileges of religion, and procuring everlasting good for those whom they subdued.

It was the lot of Galloway in the eighth century to be overcome, and partially occupied by them, as a portion of the kingdom of Bernicia ; and they too revered St. Ninian ; and in the place where he was resting, and where his miracles were recorded to have been wrought, they established a monastery, and introduced a new succession of Bishops, under the metropolitan See of York. Then it was that Bede wrote of St. Ninian, and Alcuin was in correspondence with the brethren of the monastery. This succession continued as long as the Saxons had possession of Galloway ; and the names of the Bishops are recorded from 723 to 790.

After this it was again broken ; for fresh incursions afflicted the unhappy country. They were now overrun, not by a people who introduced a pure religion and social improvement, but by hordes of Irish, called Cruithne, or Picts, which is said to be a word of the same meaning ; a distinct race, be it observed, from all who had previously borne that name. They were an uncivilized and very savage people, who brought their own religion and habits, and established them here.

They were long known as the wild Picts of Galloway, and continued as a distinct and notoriously barbarous people till after the time of St. Aelred ; indeed Gaelic continued to be spoken here till the time of Mary Stuart. These are the Picts of later times, from whom the Picts' wall is named. During the dreary period which followed their invasion, the Bishop of Man, the nearest See, took charge of the deserted flock. A work of love which may add some little to our interest in that lowly relic of the Celtic Church.

In the twelfth century however brighter days beamed on Galloway. The power of the Saxon race who ruled in Scotland increased, and the Lords of Galloway, with their country, became dependent on the sovereign, and enjoyed the dangerous distinction of being the first to make the onset in his battles. David I. was a devotedly religious prince ; the perfect example, as historians not disposed to flattery have called him, of a good king, whom St. Aelred loved and mourned over as though he were his father. His great object was to restore religion in Scotland, and with this view he founded Bishopricks and monasteries throughout his dominions, and St. Ninian's See was first restored.¹ But such was the fallen condition of the Scottish Church, that no Bishop was left to consecrate the newly appointed one. And by the direction of the Pope, Thurstan, the Archbishop of York, performed the office. The Bishop, Gilaldan, from the evidence of ancient custom, as he said, acknowledged the obedience of his See to York ; referring to the time of the Saxon succession in the eighth century. Gallo-

¹ If it had not been, it was earlier ; as some think, by Malcolm III., in the preceding century.

way thus again became part of the Province of York, which gives the English Church another claim on St. Ninian ; and so continued, certainly till the fourteenth century, and perhaps till the establishment of St. Andrew's as a metropolitan Church in the fifteenth. Thus was the Church again restored in Galloway, and continued to flourish till the change of religion in the sixteenth century ; her Bishop, out of regard to St. Ninian, and the antiquity of the See, taking the first place among the Scottish Bishops.

Soon after this new foundation of the Bishoprick, the Lord of Galloway, Fergus, followed up the work of his sovereign and friend, and imitated in Galloway the course he had taken in the rest of Scotland. He is spoken of by the historians of Galloway as in his sphere, one of the greatest benefactors of his country. He found his people wild, barbarous, and irreligious, and to effect a reformation among them, he established monasteries, as sources from which flowed forth the blessings of holy example and Christian teaching, and moral and social improvement, which in time took effect upon the people.

At Whithern he introduced a body of Præmonstratensian canons, an order then recently established, and full of life ; it was an offset from Saulseat, where he had previously brought a colony from Cockersand, in Lancashire. These formed the Chapter, (the Prior, during the vacancy of the See, being Vicar General) and elected the Bishop, though with occasional opposition from the secular Clergy. It was soon after the foundation of the Priory that St. Aelred wrote his Life of St. Ninian, and the chancel of the Church was built not long after ; the publication of the Life probably

making the virtues of St. Ninian known, and drawing numerous worshippers and offerings to his shrine.

From that time the Saint was held in the highest veneration, and his shrine visited, and his intercession sought by people from every part. Thousands of pilgrims came every year ; and a general protection, very necessary in those days of Border warfare, was granted by James the First, in 1425, to all strangers coming into Scotland to visit St. Ninian's tomb ; and in 1506 it was renewed for all persons of England, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, coming by sea or land to the Church of Whithern in honour of St. Ninian.

Numerous Churches in every part of Scotland are dedicated to him. In England there is one at Brougham, in the diocese of Carlisle, within the limits of his ancient diocese, the name of which is now corrupted into Ninechurch ; and another, it is believed, at a place, called St. Ninian's, in Northumberland, where an annual fair is held on his Day, (O. S.) Sept. 27. Many wells too in the Border counties are called by his name, and believed to have special virtues derived from him ; never drying in the hottest, or freezing in the coldest weather ; and still thought by the people to wash linen whiter than any other water.

The accounts of miracles wrought, and blessings obtained through his prayers, enter largely into the ordinary civil history of Scotland. For instance, David II. received several wounds from the English archers, at Neville's Cross, before he was taken prisoner ; one of the arrow heads could not be extracted, and remained, it is said by the historian of the times, till he went to St. Ninian's, then the flesh opened and the arrow head sprung out.

Besides other kings and nobles who visited the

shrine, James IV., on whom the memory of his father's death hung so heavily, made a pilgrimage to St. Ninian's (so Whithern was usually called), once at least every year. The treasurer's books of his reign contain many notices illustrative of the circumstances of his visits and his large almsgivings. One pilgrimage he made on foot to pray for the safety of his Queen on the birth of her first son, and, after her recovery, she came with a great attendance to return thanks for the blessing she had received. This was Margaret, the daughter of Henry VII. and the mother of our Stuarts.

In the next generation, when Whithern was again without a Bishop, these pilgrimages continued so rooted in the habits and affections of the people, that the utmost zeal of the preachers could not put them down, till they were made punishable by law, in 1581. Such was the regard for our holy Saint, and so deeply fixed in the minds of those who had been blessed by him. And doubtless it still lingers in the belief of those who enjoy the fair water of his springs, or show his cave to the passing stranger, or glory in the honour the Saint once gave to their native town.

James I. restored a Bishop to Galloway, who was consecrated in 1610. The succession continued till 1689 ; when John Gordon, the last Bishop, followed the King to Ireland and France, and continued to perform the offices of the English Church at St. Germans. He died abroad ; and St. Ninian's country was again included in the diocese of Glasgow—in name, at least, for throughout the whole district of Galloway, there is no Clergyman or congregation in communion with the Scottish Bishops. So entirely has that portion been swept away, so dreary a region to an English-

man is the country, which St. Ninian blessed by his labours and his prayers.

In 1684 the tower of the Church was still standing among the ruins of the aisles, transepts, and extensive monastic buildings. All these are gone ; but we may still trace them partly in their foundations, partly as portions of houses, partly as used for building materials, or kept as ornaments. The chancel has been preserved, being used by the Parishioners, till of late years, as their place of worship. It was built upon the site of much more ancient buildings, which had been the crypt, as it would seem, of an extensive Church ; for there are large vaults of old and rude masonry around, which rise higher than the level of the chancel floor. They must have been part of the original Church of St. Ninian, of the fourth century ; or built by the Saxons in the eighth century, and it would be interesting to ascertain whether they are not really part of a Church, the building and date of which are so marked in the Ecclesiastical History of Scotland. The chancel is a well proportioned and beautiful specimen of the early English style. The South-west door-way is round, and elegantly worked, the windows pointed, of single lights. In the north wall, in the usual place near the east end, are two canopied recesses, apparently sepulchral ones, nearly on the level of the floor, in one of which doubtless St. Ninian's body lay.¹

¹ The words, north and east are used, though improperly, for the Church stands north and south ; a circumstance which we may connect with St. Aelred, for that is the position of his Abbey Church at Rievaulx, and persons are sometimes glad to repeat even defects, when they remind them of a place they love. Fergus loved Aelred, and planted a colony of Cistercians from Rievaulx at Dundrennan ; St. Aelred himself was in Galloway, and probably concerned in founding the Priory.

This even is now dismantled ; a new building was erected about twenty years ago, which is the place of worship for the Parishioners ; and the roof and furniture were removed from the old chancel, and the mere walls left ; and that Church—once the most honoured in Scotland, where the holy remains of St. Ninian lay, and crowds of suppliants sought his intercession, where once the chaunt was heard by night and day, where holy men anticipated and prepared for heaven—that Church is now bare and roofless, exposed to the wild winds ; grass grows upon the pavement, and ivy and wild flowers ornament its walls. A sad sight indeed ; but it is beautiful in its ruins, and more pleasing far thus consecrated by loneliness and desolation, than defaced by incongruities, or applied to uses inconsistent with its spirit. A sad sight indeed, but one which harmonizes well with the condition of that system of which it formed a part ; a system the fair relics of which we love to trace in history, and complete in imagination ; which once was, and is no longer. Here St. Ninian laboured to raise a spiritual as well as a material Building, and to frame it in its services and doctrines after the Catholic model. Where is that Church ? Where are those services now ? There remains but a ruin of what once existed in beauty and honour.

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